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Root, Brook rescue England on day one

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Bangladesh says it will not travel to India for T20 WC over 'security concerns'

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

Tricky wicket: An image from the match between Bangladesh and India at the 2023 men's ODI World Cup held in India. FILE PHOTO

With less than five weeks remaining for the Men's T20 World Cup, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has announced that its team will "not travel to India" for the tournament, and has formally requested the International Cricket Council (ICC) to "consider relocating Bangladesh's matches outside India".

The announcement came a day after the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) directed the Indian Premier League franchise Kolkata Knight Riders to part ways with Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman.

The BCB issued a statement on Sunday evening following an emergency meeting of its Board of Directors convened to discuss Bangladesh's participation in the World Cup in light of the recent escalation in political tensions between India and Bangladesh.

"Following a thorough assessment of the prevailing situation and the growing concerns regarding the safety and security of the Bangladesh contingent in India, and considering the advice from the Bangladesh government, the Board of Directors resolved that the Bangladesh national team will not travel to India for the tournament under the current conditions," the statement said.

The matter now rests with the ICC, which is expected to respond to the BCB's request within the next few days.

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Venezuela V-P to take over as Maduro held in U.S. jail

Venezuela's top court appoints Vice-President Rodríguez as Acting President while the U.S. holds Maduro; acting leader may pay a 'bigger price' if she does not 'do what is right', says Trump

Associated Press
Reuters
CARACAS

Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro at the offices of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in New York on Saturday. REUTERS

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro was held in a New York prison on Sunday to face criminal charges after being captured in a nighttime military operation done without approval from the U.S. Congress, even as the South American country's top court appointed Vice-President Delcy Rodríguez as interim leader.

Mr. Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, were taken from their home in a military base by U.S. forces on Saturday – an act that Mr. Maduro's government called "imperialist". The couple faces U.S. charges of participating in a narco-terrorism conspiracy.

In Venezuela, the the Supreme Court ordered on Saturday that Ms. Rodríguez assume the role of Acting President in the absence of Mr. Maduro.

While the court said Ms. Rodríguez would assume "the office of President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in order to guarantee administrative continuity and the comprehensive defence of the nation", she demanded that the U.S. free Mr. Maduro and called him the country's rightful leader.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday said Ms. Rodríguez may pay a bigger price than Mr. Maduro "if she does not do what is right," according to an interview with *The Atlantic magazine*.

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DEMOCRATS 'MISLED'
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India 'concerned' for the well-being of Venezuelans

NEW DELHI
A day after the U.S. took away President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, from Venezuela's capital Caracas, India expressed its concern for the "well-being of the people of Venezuela", and called for dialogue to ensure peace in the region. » PAGE 10

NEARBY

99.4% of fair price shops in State automated

BENGALURU
The government has automated 20,741 fair price shops (FPSs) accounting for 99.4% of the total 20,862 FPSs in the State by installing electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) devices. » PAGE 5

Stone-pelting during religious procession

BENGALURU
Tension prevailed in parts of J.J. Nagar on Sunday night after a stone-pelting incident allegedly took place during a religious procession near V.S. Garden in the J.J. Nagar police station limits. » PAGE 4

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 5

Centre will allow multiple airports in major cities, says Civil Aviation Minister

K. Srinivasa Rao
VIZIANAGARAM

Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu at the Bhogapuram airport near Visakhapatnam on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu said here on Sunday that the Union government would allow functioning of two or more airports each in major cities in view of increased air passenger traffic across the country.

"The Centre will review the existing policy that bars the functioning of two airports within a 150-km radius," Mr. Rammohan Naidu said after the successful first test flight at the new Alluri Sitharama Raju International Airport at Bhogapuram in Vizianagaram of Andhra Pradesh.

To a query, he said the Centre was already taking steps for the construction of new airports in Mumbai, Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh (located about 42 km from New Delhi), Bengaluru, Parandur in Chennai, and other cities.

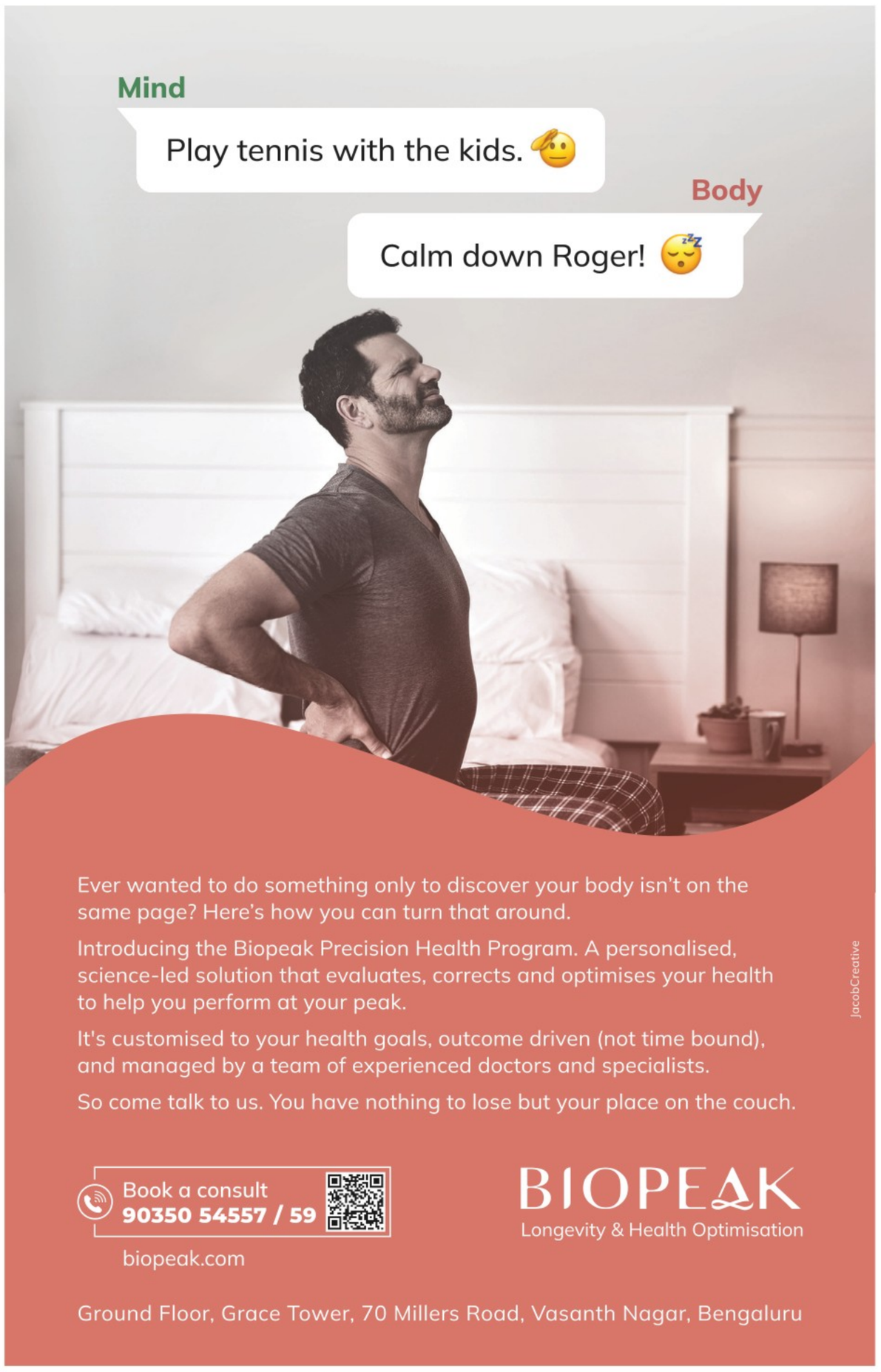
"The government will accept the proposals for new airports when the existing airports reach saturation levels," he said.

The Union government was according top priority to the aviation sector by promoting new airports, along with maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facilities, to spur economic activity and ensure direct and indirect employment to many, Mr. Rammohan Naidu said.

Recalling the success story of the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport at Shamshabad in Telangana that was established on 5,000 acres of land, the Minister lauded the initiative taken by N. Chandrababu Naidu when he was the Chief Minister of unified Andhra Pradesh between 1995 and 2003.

He said the government would accord equal priority to developing multiple access roads to all airports as they too would indirectly spur economic activity and industrial progress.

TRIAL FLIGHT
» PAGE 7



Ballari case: 26 arrested

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

As many as 26 persons were arrested on Sunday in connection with the clash in Ballari between supporters of Ballari MLA Nara Bharath Reddy and Gangavati MLA Gali Janardhana Reddy on the New Year day that claimed the life of a Congress worker and injured several others.

Meanwhile Home Minister G. Parameshwara told presspersons in Bengaluru that the government was considering the possibility of ordering a CID probe. According to him, a final decision would be taken after consulting Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

FULL REPORTS ON
» PAGE 7

India's Russian oil imports at six-month high in November

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India's Russian oil imports rose to a six-month high in terms of volume and value in November 2025, with its share in India's overall oil imports rising to 35%, latest data showed.

This comes at a time when there has been little progress in finalising a trade deal with the U.S. However, India had also increased its purchases of American oil, which jumped to a seven-month high in November, accounting for nearly 13% of India's oil imports that month. Together, Russia and the U.S. accounted for nearly half of India's oil imports in November 2025.

The data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed that India imported 7.7 million tonnes of oil from Russia in November, accounting for 35.1% of the country's total oil imports that month. This was also nearly 7% higher than the volume imported in November 2024 and the highest since May 2025. In value terms, India imported $3.7 billion worth of Russian oil in November 2025, constituting 34% of its oil import bill.

CONTINUED ON
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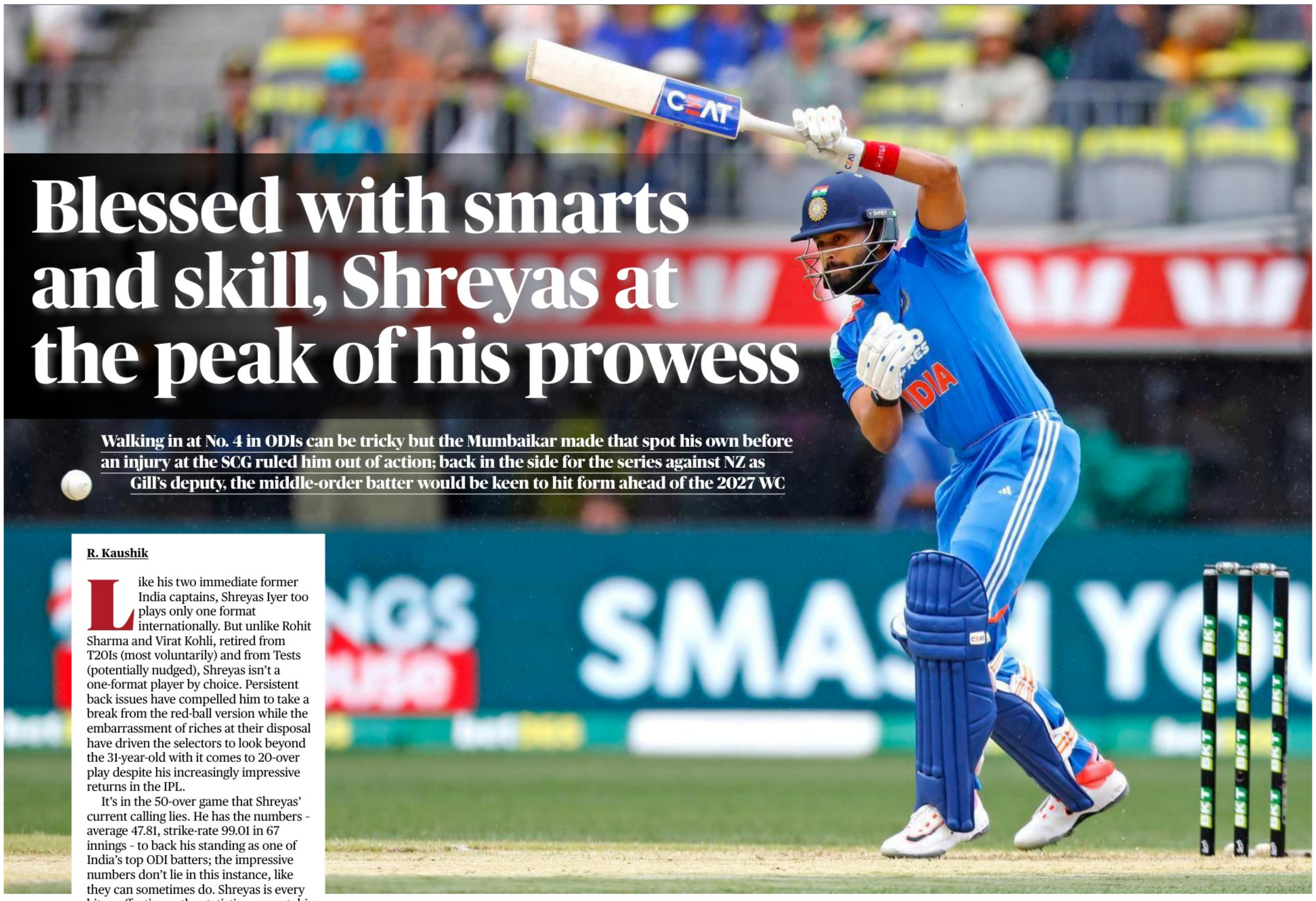

Blessed with smarts and skill, Shreyas at the peak of his prowess

Walking in at No. 4 in ODIs can be tricky but the Mumbaikar made that spot his own before an injury at the SCG ruled him out of action; back in the side for the series against NZ as Gill's deputy, the middle-order batter would be keen to hit form ahead of the 2027 WC

R. Kaushik

Like his two immediate former India captains, Shreyas Iyer too plays only one format internationally. But unlike Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, retired from T20Is (most voluntarily) and from Tests (potentially nudged), Shreyas isn't a one-format player by choice. Persistent back issues have compelled him to take a break from the red-ball version while the embarrassment of riches at their disposal have driven the selectors to look beyond the 31-year-old with it comes to 20-over play despite his increasingly impressive returns in the IPL.

It's in the 50-over game that Shreyas' current calling lies. He has the numbers - average 47.81, strike-rate 99.01 in 67 innings - to back his standing as one of India's top ODI batters; the impressive numbers don't lie in this instance, like they can sometimes do. Shreyas is every bit as effective as the statistics suggest, his value never more apparent than at the Champions Trophy in the UAE last February-March.

ODI batting has evolved exponentially in the last several years, taking a cue from the innovative chaos that has come to characterise its 20-over sibling. Tall scores no longer raise eyebrows, and batting milestones aren't as dramatically welcomed as in the past. Shreyas' batting too has evolved, as it must for anyone to remain relevant in the current era, but it has evolved on his own terms, with faith and focus on the basics and the conventional rather than the cute and the cheeky.

Much of Shreyas' ODI career has been from the No. 4 position which, to many, is perhaps the least glamorous and most demanding of all. In Tests, the best batter in the side usually occupies that slot. India had Sachin Tendulkar at No. 4 for almost all of his career, and after the little big man eventually called time on his Test exploits in November 2013, Kohli slipped seamlessly into that role until his retirement last May. Now, Shubman Gill, the Test and ODI skipper, bats at No. 4, an indication that he is regarded as the most important and influential cog in the batting wheel.

In the spotlight: Shreyas will be watched with interest when he turns out for Mumbai against Himachal Pradesh in the Hazare Trophy on Tuesday. FILE PHOTO

The No. 4 conundrum

In ODIs, however, No. 4 is a little bit neither here nor there, if you know what we mean. Because of how the format has progressed, the clamour is for the top three slots. Flat pitches, shorter boundaries, excellent bats with extended but unobtrusive sweet spots and a slew of restrictions that give the bowlers no joy has taken a lot of the challenge of batting against the new ball out of the equation. Stronger, more powerful and definitely more versatile, batters are today emboldened to hit through the line, to take chances they wouldn't have dreamt of even a decade back, even when the ball is at its newest and the bowlers at their freshest. Hence the concerted push to fit into one of their first three positions.

The top three set the tone, which means the play has already been made when the No. 4 walks into bat. That could be as early as in the first over in one of those rare instances of two wickets going down in a jiffy, or somewhere in the middle stages of an innings - the more likely scenario. If he walks into a mini-crisis, the two-drop batter is expected to steady the ship without losing sight of the score board. In the latter situation, his brief is to take a little, but only a little, time to get his eye in and then either sustain the scoring rate or improve upon it if the platform is both bountiful and fast-paced.

Shreyas has shown himself to be equally adept at both roles; the biggest consistent challenge of his still developing ODI career came at the Champions Trophy, on tricky pitches that are such a rarity these days in the 50-over version. Tacky and therefore shackling uninhibited ball-bashing, they called for smarts and craft, not just brutal ball-striking. India were forced to chase in four of their five matches - a couple of them straightforward, the two in the semifinals and the final against Australia and New Zealand respectively more demanding - and Shreyas delivered in all except the first of those chases, in the opener against Bangladesh when a fluent Gill century was the highlight of a modest quest.

Without attracting the same encomiums that Rohit did for teeing off in the PowerPlay so that the task of the batters to follow once the ball got softer would get easier, or the inevitable praise that came Kohli's way for masterminding crucial replies against Pakistan and in the semis against Australia, Shreyas did all that was asked of him. After his 17-ball 15 against Bangladesh, he had a sequence of 56 (67 balls), 79 (98b), 45 (62b) and 48 (62b) in India's next four matches. His highest came in the only outing in which India batted first, in their final league engagement against the Kiwis after they had already secured their place in the last four. The rest of the efforts, all under pressure of some kind or the other, were compiled with clinical precision, with little risk, as he took his time early on and then opened out without completely taking the bowling apart - the conditions didn't permit that - to ensure that India never had mounting run-rate issues to contend with.

Such was his commanding if uncelebrated presence in the middle-order that, after masterminding the four-wicket victory over New Zealand in the final with a bruising 76, Rohit called Shreyas the 'unsung hero' of India's glorious campaign. It was just the shot in the arm Shreyas received after having been in the crosshairs previously, not least because his assertion that the niggling back problem didn't allow him to bat long periods in first-class cricket was met with scepticism, if not disbelief.

Once India's selectors decided to move on from the Rohit captaincy era in October last year, it was organic that Gill would be catapulted into the hot seat because he had been the Mumbaikar's deputy at the Champions Trophy. The search for a new vice-captain ended with Shreyas. After all, he boasted impressive captaincy credentials, especially in the IPL where he took Kolkata Knight Riders to their third title in 2024 and Punjab Kings to a rare appearance in the final 12 months later.

The three-match series in Australia in mid-October was to be Shreyas' first outing in his new avatar as vice-captain. After a tepid start in the seven-wicket loss in a rain-ruined opener in Perth when he only made 11, Shreyas' 61 was instrumental, alongside Rohit's 73, in hauling the visitors to 264 for nine in Adelaide. Australia huffed and puffed to a two-wicket win to take an unbeatable 2-0 advantage as the teams headed to Sydney for the final act.

Australia were making the most of choosing to bat, having rattled to 183 for three midway through the 34th over, when a slice of Shreyas brilliance turned the match on its head. Alex Carey, the left-handed wicketkeeper-batter, tried to hammer Harshit Rana down the ground but only managed a top edge that steepled towards the untenanted outfield square on the off-side. From point, Shreyas whirled around and sprinted as if his life depended on catching the ball. Making exceptional ground, he clung on to the little white orb despite it bobbling in his hands, a game-changing moment with the last seven wickets tumbling for 53 runs.

As his teammates converged on him to celebrate a truly sensational grab, Shreyas writhed in pain and agony. The initial thought was that he had hurt his rib when he slammed the ground, but scans later revealed that the injury was a lot more serious - spleen laceration with internal bleeding. After a week in a Sydney hospital under expert supervision, he was discharged but it was obvious that he would miss cricket for at least a couple of months.

India had only one ODI series in that period, at home against South Africa. With Gill (neck) injured, Shreyas would have realised his dream of leading the country had it not been for his terrible mishap in Australia, but that wouldn't have been foremost in his mind as he embarked on a long journey of recovery and rehabilitation - a journey that he is no stranger to.

Now back in the mix, Shreyas has been named in the squad to play New Zealand in three ODIs, the first of them in Vadodara next Sunday. He hasn't played a competitive game since October 25, when he sustained the SCG injury, but is expected to line up for Mumbai against Himachal Pradesh in their Vijay Hazare Trophy match in Jaipur on Tuesday to emphatically put to bed any concerns surrounding his fitness. Shreyas has been named Gill's deputy, which must be seen as confirmation enough that the selectors are reasonably confident that he will come out of the HP game unscathed even though his selection has been greeted with a 'subject to fitness clearance' caveat.

The New Zealand series will be the last of the 'semi-contextual' bilateral showdowns ahead of the T20 World Cup beginning in a month's time. Once the World Cup, and then the IPL, are over and done with, the attention will shift to preparations for the 50-over World Cup, in southern Africa next November. Shreyas should be the fulcrum of that campaign alongside Gill and K.L. Rahul (who led India to victory last month against South Africa in Gill and Shreyas' absence); after all, at this stage, no one is 100% sure that Rohit and/or Kohli will still be active, and successfully active at that. It is imperative therefore, before he goes briefly into 50-over hibernation, that he gets a feel of the one-day game more than amassing a mountain of runs because he has little to prove to anyone as far as 50-over batsmanship is concerned.

At 31, Shreyas is at the peak of his prowess, with so much to offer tactically and strategy-wise too to his young captain. His own leadership credentials are without question and if that door opens up for some reason or the other at the international stage, Shreyas will acquit himself with credit. Tentative steps in Vadodara then, gradually snowballing into a potential shot at the most prestigious white-ball silverware.

THE GIST

- Shreyas is every bit as effective as the statistics suggest, his value never more apparent than at the Champions Trophy in the UAE last February-March
- Once the World Cup, and then the IPL, are over and done with, the attention will shift to preparations for the 50-over World Cup, in South Africa next November
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Commuters raise concerns over monkeys straying into metro stations

Experts say it's essential to eliminate food sources around these areas to prevent the animals from entering the stations

Darshan Devaiah B.P.
BENGALURU

Commuters fear that animals getting on to the tracks can get injured, disrupt services, or even cause accidents. K. MURALI KUMAR

Commuters using Bengaluru's Namma Metro have raised concerns, as monkeys and other urban wildlife frequently stray into some metro stations, warning that the issue poses serious risks to both animal safety and metro operations.

They fear that animals getting on to the tracks can get injured, disrupt services, or even cause accidents. Sangeetha Rao, a regular commuter who recently encountered a troop of monkeys at the R.V. Road Metro Station, said the experience was unsettling despite the animals appearing harmless.

"I was waiting on the platform when I suddenly noticed some monkeys moving around freely inside the station. While they did not harm anyone, it was worrying to see them so close to the tracks. A single misstep could be fatal for the animals and dangerous for commuters," she said.

Another commuter, Ramprasad M., said the issue was not limited to monkeys alone. "I have seen cats and other animals inside a few metro stations. If any of them get on to the tracks, it can be extremely dangerous. The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) should treat this as a serious safety concern and introduce concrete preventive measures," he said. The BMRCL officials said they are aware of such incidents and whenever animals enter metro premises, security personnel stationed on platforms intervene and take necessary steps to handle the situation and ensure commuter safety.

Eliminate food sources

Experts said that to prevent monkeys and other urban wildlife from entering metro stations, it's essential to eliminate all food sources in and around these areas. "This means no eatables inside metro stations, no food stalls near entrances, and strict control measures on littering. Food should be completely removed from the environment, because animals are not entering out of curiosity, they are entering for survival. If the food source is removed, the frequency of these incidents will naturally drop," Col. Dr. Navaz Shariff, General Manager and Chief Wildlife Veterinarian, PfA Wildlife Hospital, Bengaluru, told *The Hindu*.

He further opined that the metro authorities must strengthen waste management systems with proper garbage disposal, timely clearing of bins, and full-proof segregation of wet and dry waste. "People should strictly avoid feeding macaques or leaving behind leftovers, as this creates dependency and attracts more wildlife into high-risk zones. As urbanisation expands, natural habitats are shrinking and wildlife is being pushed closer to human spaces. We have to recognise that cities are not only occupied by humans, animals are learning to survive within them," Dr. Shariff said.

He added that human-animal coexistence is not optional. It is a shared responsibility.

When encounters happen, people should not throw stones at these animals or hit them, but awareness, patience, and preventive systems are key.

Pigeons: A growing health menace

Several commuters also flagged pigeons as a growing health menace inside metro stations. Large numbers of pigeons are often seen roosting in station areas, leaving behind droppings and feathers. "Pigeons in enclosed public spaces are a serious public health hazard. Their droppings and feathers can transmit diseases and cause respiratory problems," Mr. Ramprasad said, urging the BMRCL to address the issue urgently.

Recently, V. Lakshminath, Deputy Secretary of the Health and Family Welfare Department, wrote to the Urban Development Department, seeking steps to regulate and prohibit the feeding of pigeons in public places.

In a letter dated December 16, the department highlighted the growing risks posed by excessive pigeon droppings and feathers in densely populated areas.

Citing medical experts, the letter warned that prolonged exposure could lead to respiratory illnesses such as hypersensitivity pneumonitis and other lung diseases, and called for strict enforcement by civic authorities.

Mobile phones, SIM cards seized from jail

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

As part of the 'Prison Reforms Awareness Campaign', a surprise inspection was conducted at the Central Prison on Saturday and five mobile phones and six SIM cards were seized.

The inspection was carried out between 12.20 p.m. and 4.20 p.m., during which authorities recovered the prohibited items from inside the prison. The items include five mobile phones, six SIM cards, one charger cable, and one earphone, the prison officials said.

Following the seizure, a case has been registered under Section 42 of the Karnataka Prisons (Amendment) Act, 2022, along with other relevant sections. The officials said the crackdown has intensified since November last year.

A total of 24 FIRs have been registered so far, with authorities recovering 126 mobile phones and 98 SIM cards between November 26 and January 3 this year, highlighting the scale of illegal communication networks operating inside the jail.

THE HINDU GROUP

The all-new Kia Seltos Presents

THE HINDU LIT FOR LIFE 2026
THE SHARPEST LITERATURE FESTIVAL IN INDIA
In association with CHRIST
NITTE

LITERARY TRIVIA CHALLENGE

1. Which 19th-century missionary-scholar introduced the Tirukkural to Western readers through his English verse translation?
2. Which magical object reveals one's deepest desire in the Harry Potter series?
3. The Sahitya Akademi Award recognises outstanding literary works across India's linguistic diversity. How many languages are currently recognised under this award?

*T&C apply.

Scan QR code or visit https://newsth.live/LFLQUIZ to take the quiz. Top 3 winners* every day win gift vouchers.

Answer to yesterday's quiz:
1. Narendra Modi | 2. Björn Borg
3. László Krasznahorkai

Yesterday's Winners:
1. A.N.Srinivasa Murthy, Bengaluru | 2. A.Somasundarraj, Chennai
3. Vipul Saini, Saharanpur

Kogilu Layout evictions: Organisations place four demands before govt.

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Multiple organisations joined hands with families who lost their homes in a demolition drive carried out by the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) in Kogilu Layout, organised a public meeting on Sunday. They placed four demands before the government.

Members of various organisations, along with the evicted families, taking a pledge during a public meeting, organised at Kogilu in Bengaluru on Sunday. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

Demands

The organisations reiterated the same four demands that were submitted to the Bengaluru Deputy Commissioner earlier. The demands include permanent rehabilitation for the evicted families, issuance of property deeds or occupancy certificates to rehabilitated families, temporary arrangements for basic facilities at the demolition site, and an assurance that the evicted families will not be forced to move from the area.

Women's, minority, and Dalit organisations participated in the public meeting-cum-protest on Sunday, and put pressure on the government to expedite the allotment of houses to the affected families, as promised, and ensure proper rehabilitation. Last week, Minister for Minority Welfare and Housing B.Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan had promised to allot sites to the displaced families on January 1. However, two deadlines have passed, and the latest one has now been pushed to Monday. The department appears to be at a crossroads, noting that the final count of 'eligible beneficiaries' is yet to be determined.

Pooja H.M. of Dudiyuva Janara Vedike said that an association has been formed seeking justice to the evicted families and ensure that the affected people are not stripped off basic rights. She noted that they were committed to continuing the peaceful protest until their demands were met.

Right to live

Speaking at the event, CITU leader Umesh said, "Under Article 19, people have the right to live freely anywhere in the country. Branding Indians as foreigners merely because they are Muslims is unacceptable."

Meanwhile, the government is expected to begin the process of allotting sites to the affected families after verifying documents. However, Leader of the Opposition R. Ashok has condemned the government's move to rehabilitate the affected families.

'Preferential treatment'

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has announced that it would protest against what it calls "preferential treatment" to Kogilu residents. The party has asserted that the government should first allot houses to thousands of applicants under the Rajiv Gandhi Housing Scheme.

Meanwhile, Zia Nomani, programme director at a law and policy research institute, has written to the Chairman of the Karnataka State Minority Commission seeking to register a complaint against Mr. Ashok for his alleged 'provocative' statements in connection with the Kogilu Layout demolition issue.

He has pointed out that Mr. Ashok demanded a probe by the National Investigation Agency and introduced a 'Bangladeshi immigrants' angle to the issue.

Protest against bad treatment meted out to strays

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A large number of animal lovers gathered at Freedom Park, in the heart of the city, on Sunday to protest against the illegal picking up, caging, and poisoning of stray dogs across the country over the past few weeks.

Members of South Bengaluru Cares and volunteers taking part in a protest against illegally picking up stray dogs and caging them, in Bengaluru on Sunday. ANI

The protest was part of the Bengaluru chapter of the nationwide *Do or Die* campaign.

Systematic failures

Harini Raghavan, founder of Citizens for Animal Birth Control (ABC), said, "Most dog-bites happen because there are limited or no ABC efforts. The failure of the ABC lead to dog-bites. We cannot penalise dogs for systemic failures." Manjari Chaitanya, founder trustee of South Bengaluru Cares, said, "This is not just about dogs. This is about governance failure and public safety. We demand that the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) give us a written assurance that they will stop illegally picking up dogs and throwing them into cages."

The organisers also launched a WatchDog team that will act on the ground to stop illegal pick-ups, file police complaints, and legally pursue cases of cruelty.

BEFORE THE HON'BLE XXXV ADDL. CITY CIVIL & SESSIONS JUDGE, AT BENGALURU
OS No. 1434 of 2025 (CCH-36)

BETWEEN :

1. SMT. MALTI NARENDRAKUMAR JAIN, Wife of late Sri. Narendrakumar Jain, Aged about 88 years, Residing at No. 81-A, Anita, Mount Pleasant Road, Malabar hill, Mumbai, Maharashtra - 400006. **...PLAINTIFF NO.1**
Represented by her constituted attorney, Sri. Rajiv Narendrakumar Jain

2. SRI. RAJIV NARENDRAKUMAR JAIN, Son of late Sri. Narendrakumar Jain, Aged about 68 years, Residing at No. 81-A, Anita, Mount Pleasant Road, Malabar hill, Mumbai, Maharashtra - 400006. **...PLAINTIFF NO.2**

3. SMT. SABINA ANILKUMAR SANGHVI, Daughter of late Sri. Narendrakumar Jain, Aged about 66 years, Residing at No. 101, National Housing Society, Baner Road, Sindh Society, Aundh, Pune, Maharashtra - 411007.
...PLAINTIFF NO.3
Represented by her constituted attorney, Sri. Rajiv Narendrakumar Jain

SUMMONS TO DEFENDANT No. 1 & 2, IA PP

To, 1. M/S PAL AND PAUL BUILDERS Promoters and Builders, A partnership firm having its offices at: 3, Hayes Road Cross, Bangalore - 560025.
Also having its offices at: 3, CJ D'Souza Road, Bangalore - 560025.
And: No. G-48, Green Park, New Delhi - 110016. **...DEFENDANT NO.1**
Represented by its Partner Sri. S.P. Oberoi

2. SRI. S.P. OBEROI, Partner, M/s Pal and Paul Builders, C/o Ansal Housing Finance & Leasing Co. Ltd., 1st floor, Jubilee Building, No.15, Museum Road, Bangalore - 560001.
Also residing at: No. 396, 9th Main, 1st Cross, HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagar, Bangalore - 560038. having its offices at: 3, Hayes Road Cross, Bangalore - 560025
And: 3, CJ D'Souza Road, Bangalore - 560025.
Also having its offices at: No. G-48, Green Park, New Delhi - 110016. **...DEFENDANT NO.2**

NOTICE / SUMMONS TO DEFENDANTS

WHEREAS, the above-named Plaintiffs have instituted the present suit before this Hon'ble Court seeking the relief of declaration that the Plaintiffs have acquired a valid right, title and interest over the Schedule Apartment (more fully described in the Schedule below). The Plaintiffs are in possession of the Schedule Apartment from 07.10.1982 till date, for over 43 years now.

You are hereby summoned to appear before this Hon'ble Court **on 3.2.2026 at 11 a.m.** in person or through advocate/pleader to answer the same, failing which this suit will be heard and determined as ex-parte.

SUIT SCHEDULE PROPERTY

Schedule A Property (Schedule Apartment)

All that piece and parcel of Apartment No.63, 6th floor, Shalimar Apartment, situated at No.3, C.J. D'Souza Road, Bangalore - 560025, measuring approximately 1187.48 square feet in total, comprising of 2 bedrooms with attached bathrooms, dining cum drawing room, kitchen, balcony, store, servant room and the common service area.

Schedule B Property

All that piece and parcel of immovable property being a residential premises wherein a multi-storied apartment building under the name and style "Shalimar Apartments" is situated at No.3, C.J. D'Souza Road, Bangalore - 560025, comprising of ground and seven floors (ground, first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh floors) on the site measuring East to West 140 feet and North to South 130 feet, in all measuring about 18,200 square feet, along with common areas and facilities - (i) ground floor consists of water tank, meter room, toilet, pump room and terrace area along with staircase which leads from the ground floor to the roof of the building; (ii) plumbing network throughout the building; (iii) electric wiring network throughout the building; (iv) necessary light and public water connections; and (v) the foundations and main walls, columns grinders, beams and roofs of the building are of RCC, with entrance from D'Souza Road, bounded on the:

East by : Private property facing Richmond Road, West by : Common Area - D'Souza Road, North by : Private property 2 D'Souza Road, South by : Private property 4 D'Souza Road

Schedule C Property

All that piece and parcel of land with the main residential building, out buildings and the compound walls constructed thereon known as 'Manamel' and bearing corporation Old No. 2-B, Residency Road, corresponding to New No.3, Hayes Road Cross, Bangalore - 560001, in Division No.60, bounded on the:

East by : Premises No.2, C.J. D'Souza Road, owned by Mr. D.V. Vishwanath, West by : Premises No.4, C.J. D'Souza Road, known as 'The Laurels', North by : C.J. D'Souza Road, also commonly known as Hayes Road Cross, Bengaluru, South by : Premises No.7, Richmond Road, known as 'Homeleigh'.

Given under my hand and seal of the Hon'ble Court, this 3rd day of December 2025.

By Order of the Court, Senior Sheristedar, City Civil Court, Bengaluru .
Address for Service: **Mr. Manu Kulkarni**
Poovayya & Co.
Advocates & Solicitors
The Estate, Level Four, No. 121, Dickenson Road, Bengaluru - 560 042.

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, REENA Rajendra Saad, w/o: Saad Rajendra Indrajith, r/o: NOF102 Nisarga Jasmine Apts 2nd Blck 2nd Stage Basaveshwaranagar Blr Karanataka–560079. Have changed my name as Reena Rajendra Sad.

We, Nitesh D Pirgal & Yogeetha N Pirgal, No.19, Rama Iyengar Road, V. V. Puram, Blore-4, have changed my minor daughters name from Palak N Pirgal to Palak Jain

WE, MEENAKSHI Sundaram Karuppiah and Pratibha Gurusamy R/at: G0 Mercury Block, Sunny Dew Apartment, MGR Layout, Mahadevapura, Bengaluru- 48, have changed our minor son's name from Krishanth Meenakshi Sundaram to Krishanth Meenakshi vide affidavit on 02-01-2026 before Notary Anand Kumar. J, Bengaluru.

WE, MEENAKSHI Sundaram Karuppiah and Pratibha Gurusamy R/at: G0 Mercury Block, Sunny Dew Apartment, MGR Layout, Mahadevapura, Bengaluru- 48, have changed our minor son's name from Ashwin Meenakshi Sundaram to Ashwin Meenakshi vide affidavit on 02-01-2026 before Notary Anand Kumar. J, Bengaluru.

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Ankit, S/o. Ashokrao Gomkale, residing at T3-30B, 30th Floor, Pashmina Waterfront, Bhattarahalli, Bengaluru - 560049, have changed my name to Ankit Ashokrao Gomkale for all future purposes.

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LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE HON'BLE PRINCIPAL SENIOR CIVIL JUDGE: KADAPA
O.S.No.33/2025

Sanapureddy Madhan Mohan Reddy, s/o. Sanapureddy Chinna Ramalinga Reddy, aged about 57 years, Hindu, Cultivation-cum-Business, resident of D/No.39/132, Pakkirpalli Village, Chinnachowk area, Kadapa City. Aadhar No. 6766 6456 7425, Cell No: 94403 37409
...Plaintiff
Vs
Bandela Sowjanya, w/o. Bandela Jayaraju, aged about 48 years, Hindu, Housewife, resident of Flat No.E-501, Sri Pride Apartment, Owners Court East, Kasavanahalli, Bangalore City, Karnataka State, Aadhar No.8074 5811 9819, Mobile No.not known ..Defendant No.9

SUMMONS TO DEFENDANT No.9

That the above Plaintiff has filed aforesaid suit against you and others for declaration of his right and title and for consequential injunction and other reliefs and the said case is posted to 22.01.2026 for your appearance. Therefore you have to appear before the aforesaid Hon'ble Court on 22.01.2026 at 10.30 AM either personally or through your Counsel and raise your objections, if any, otherwise it will be heard and decided in your absence.

By the order of Hon'ble Court
T.SUBRAMANYAM
M.VENKATA RAMANA
Advocate, D.No.1/380-3, Maruthi Nagar, Kadapa, A.P., INDIA-516001

IN THE COURT OF THE HON'BLE PRINCIPAL SENIOR CIVIL JUDGE: KADAPA
I.A.No. 163/2025
O.S.No.33/2025

Sanapureddy Madhan Mohan Reddy, s/o. Sanapureddy Chinna Ramalinga Reddy, aged about 57 years, Hindu, Cultivation-cum-Business, resident of D/No.39/132, Pakkirpalli Village, Chinnachowk area, Kadapa City. Aadhar No. 6766 6456 7425, Cell No: 94403 37409
...Petitioner/Plaintiff
Vs
Bandela Sowjanya, w/o. Bandela Jayaraju, aged about 48 years, Hindu, Housewife, resident of Flat No.E-501, Sri Pride Apartment, Owners Court East, Kasavanahalli, Bangalore City, Karnataka State, Aadhar No.8074 5811 9819, Mobile No.not known
...Respondent No.9/Defendant No.9

NOTICE TO RESPONDENT No.9/DEFENDANT No.9

That the above Petitioner/Plaintiff has filed aforesaid I.A. No. 163/2025, against you and others for interim injunction and the said I.A. is posted to 22.01.2026 for your appearance. Therefore you have to appear before the aforesaid Hon'ble court on 22.01.2026 at 10.30 AM either personally or through your Counsel and raise your objections, if any, otherwise it will be heard and decided in your absence.

By the order of Hon'ble Court
T.SUBRAMANYAM
M.VENKATA RAMANA
Advocate, D.No.1/380-3, Maruthi Nagar, Kadapa, A.P., INDIA-516001

Unusual genetic code in Antarctic microbes yields rare amino acid

A recent pioneering study may enable scientists to engineer proteins with previously unknown functional advantages; this advancement could facilitate novel bioengineering approaches, allowing researchers to manipulate bacteria to produce valuable materials, according to independent experts

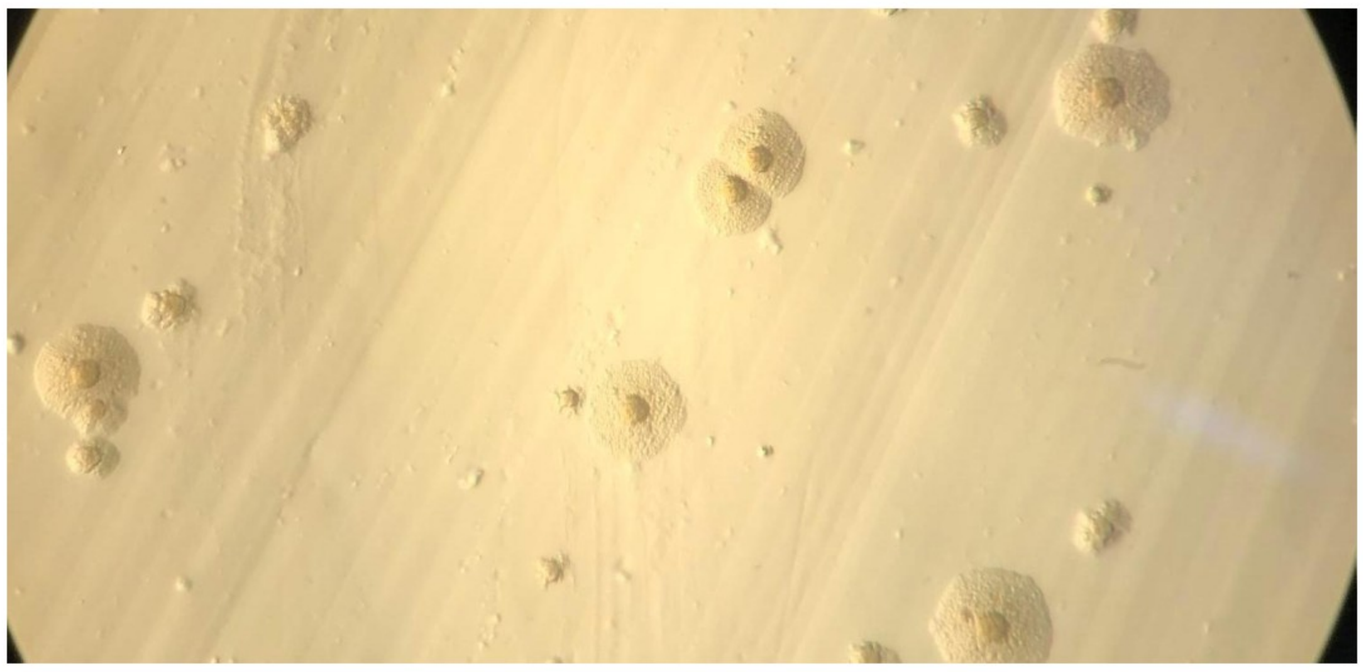
Sayantan Datta

The dictionary of life has a new update. A DNA sequence that signals cells in almost all other organisms to stop synthesising proteins instead encodes a rare amino acid in some archaea, according to a study published in *Science* in November.

Archaea are microbes that resemble bacteria in shape and size but are biologically distinct.

Calling the study "the first of its kind," Bose Institute, Kolkata, biological sciences associate professor Abhrajyoti Ghosh said the discovery could help scientists engineer proteins with "functional advantages that have been hitherto unknown." Dr. Ghosh studies how archaea respond to stress.

The study's findings provide "yet another fantastic example of how biology hides secrets that drive biotechnology innovation," University of California, Berkeley, chemistry professor and study coauthor Alanna Schepartz said in a statement.



Mycoplasma growing on Hayflick agar. The stop codon TGA encodes the amino acid tryptophan in these bacteria and the rarer amino acid selenocysteine in humans. THEKNOWHOWE (CC BY-SA)

Reading the dictionary

By the late 1960s, scientists had identified the set of rules that dictate how a sequence of DNA corresponds to the order in which amino acids are placed in proteins. These rules came to be called the genetic code.

At the heart of this code are the four nitrogen-containing bases that are a part of DNA: adenine (A), guanine (G), cytosine (C) and thymine (T). Each amino acid in a protein corresponds to a three-base-long sequence of DNA – a.k.a. a triplet codon. For example, a codon consisting of three thymines (TTT) corresponds to the amino acid phenylalanine, while TTA encodes leucine.

The genetic code is a dictionary of 64 such codons. Of these, 61 'sense' codons together encode 20 common amino acids. The remaining three, called 'stop' codons, don't correspond to any amino acid. Instead, when the protein-making mechanism encounters them, it terminates the protein chain.

Exceptional archaea

This code is for the most part common to all living organisms. Exceptions are rare. Some notable ones include the bacterium *Mycoplasma*, where the stop codon TGA encodes the amino acid tryptophan. In human beings, the same stop codon encodes the rare amino acid selenocysteine, used in a small number of proteins. In a few proteins in some archaea, the stop codon TAG doubles up as a code for another rare amino acid, pyrrolysine (Pyl).

Even in archaea where TAG is known to sometimes encode Pyl, scientists had until recently believed these organisms usually "use TAG as a stop codon, except in the very few enzymes in which Pyl occurs," the authors of the *Science* study wrote in their paper.

That is now set to change. In their study, the authors reported certain archaea where the TAG codon has been completely repurposed. These organisms read the TAG codon as a signal for Pyl not occasionally but always: i.e. every time there is a TAG codon in the organisms' DNA, they incorporate Pyl in a protein chain.

This "genome-wide incorporation of Pyl at TAG codons" has led the team to propose "the existence of a previously unrecognised genetic code," the authors wrote. Dubbed the 'Pyl code' by the team, it has 62 sense codons instead of the usual 61. And they code for 21 amino acids instead of the conventional 20.

Predicting proteins

The authors used computational methods to identify nine kinds of archaea where the TAG codon appeared to have been completely repurposed to encode Pyl. From these, they chose two archaea for experiments. One of these was *Methanococcoides burtonii*, which grows in the extremely low temperatures of Antarctic lakes. The other was *Methanomethylophilus alvi*, found in the human gut.

From these archaea, the researchers extracted proteins, fragmented them, and used a technique called mass spectrometry to identify the constituent amino acids. They found 54 proteins "not previously shown to contain Pyl," they wrote. The proteins they identified play diverse roles in these organisms, including replicating DNA and producing energy. This led the authors to conclude that "*M. burtonii* and *M. alvi* archaea have adopted a non-standard genetic code with 62 sense codons encoding 21 amino acids and only two stop codons".

> The study's findings provide "yet another fantastic example of how biology hides secrets that drive biotechnology innovation
>
> **ALANNA SCHEPARTZ**
> UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

The finding might require scientists to rethink how they predict protein sequences for these organisms. Typically, predicting the protein encoded by a gene requires researchers to read codons using the standard genetic code. But now, scientists must use the Pyl code, "interpreting all TAG codons as coding for Pyl for correct protein prediction," the authors have argued.

Bacteria as factories

The study's potential applications involve bioengineering, where researchers can manipulate bacteria to produce useful materials. The study's findings could help researchers "incorporate Pyl in proteins at desired positions," Tanweer Hussain, associate professor of developmental biology and genetics at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, said. Dr. Hussain studies how organisms build protein from their DNA blueprints.

His enthusiasm may be well founded. In their study, the Berkeley researchers genetically modified *Escherichia coli*, a common bacterium, to express the archaeal cellular machinery required to read the Pyl code and incorporate Pyl in proteins. They also engineered the bacterium to express a protein whose sequence had a TAG codon in the middle. If this setup worked, the bacteria would read this TAG codon as Pyl-coding, add Pyl at that location, and produce the complete protein. Otherwise, the TAG codon would signal 'stop', and the bacteria would produce a shorter protein.

Extracts from these bacteria confirmed that they had produced the complete protein. That is: they could indeed use the archaeal machinery to produce Pyl-containing proteins.

The discovery of the Pyl code has scientists excited. Both Dr. Hussain and Dr. Ghosh are keen to know more about the role of Pyl in proteins.

"Does Pyl incorporation confer the archaea a fitness advantage in their natural environments?" Dr. Ghosh asked.

He anticipated that future research could soon offer an answer.

(Sayantan Datta is a faculty member at Krea University and an independent science journalist. dattasayantan95@gmail.com)

THE GIST

The genetic code is a dictionary of 64 codons. Of these, 61 sense codons encode 20 amino acids. The remaining three, called stop codons, don't correspond to any amino acid. Instead, when the protein mechanism encounters them, it terminates the protein chain

When the authors extracted proteins from archaea, they found 54 not previously shown to contain Pyl. This led the authors to conclude that the archaea have adopted a non-standard genetic code with 62 sense codons encoding 21 amino acids and only two stop codons

Berkeley researchers modified *Escherichia coli* giving it the ability to incorporate Pyl in proteins. They also engineered it to express a protein whose sequence had a TAG codon in the middle. The bacteria read the TAG codon and add Pyl, producing the complete protein

BIG SHOT

High above a storm, a crimson figure blinks in and out of existence. If you see it, you're the lucky witness to a sprite, one of the least-understood electrical phenomena in the upper atmosphere. Sprites occur at some 80 km altitude, appearing moments after a lightning strike and taking a range of shapes. Questions about how they form remain unanswered. NICOLAS ESCURAT/NASA

QUESTION CORNER

When wolves howl at the first full moon of the year

Vasudevan Mukunth

Q: What is a wolf supermoon?

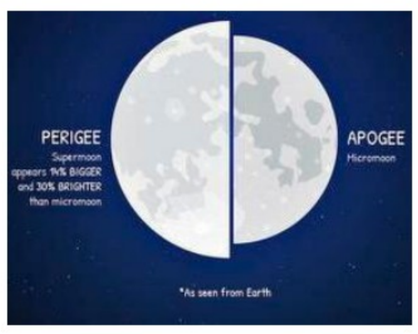
A: A "wolf supermoon" is a nickname that combines two distinct ideas: a wolf moon and a supermoon.

The January 2026 wolf supermoon occurred late last week, reaching the peak of its brightness on January 2 evening (IST).

'Wolf moon' is a traditional name for the first full moon that happens in January. In fact many full moons have old seasonal names, often popularised in almanacs and folklore, that helped people keep track of the time of the year before the advent of modern calendars.

The wolf moon is linked to wintertime stories about wolves being heard more often, but the moon itself is not doing anything special.

Second, a "supermoon" is an astronomical description. The moon goes around the earth in an oval-shaped path rather than in a perfect circle. That means sometimes the moon is a little closer to the earth, a point in its orbit called the perigee, and sometimes it's a little farther away (the farthest point is called the apogee). If a full moon happens when the moon is near the perigee, people call it a 'supermoon'.



An image comparison of the size of a supermoon (left) and the micromoon, which is the moon at its apogee (right), as seen from the earth. NASA

During the wolf supermoon, the moon can look slightly larger and brighter than an average full moon. The difference is modest but real, and is more noticeable in side-by-side photos than by casual watching. A common illusion at this time is the moon illusion, where the moon seems bigger near the horizon because of how the human brain judges distance and scale.

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GBA cadre review may lead to recruitment of over 700 staff

Rishita Khanna
BENGALURU

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) is preparing to recruit at least 700 personnel across the city's five newly formed municipal corporations for various posts including junior engineers, assistant engineers, planning assistants, supervisors, among other posts. This is part of the Cadre and Manpower (CNM) review, a comprehensive review of cadre strength and staffing requirements following the restructuring of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP).

According to officials, the authority has already begun identifying departments and posts where additional manpower is urgently required and is expected to submit a detailed recruitment proposal to the State government in the coming months. "The exercise spans a wide range of posts, across engineering, health, revenue, town planning, administration and solid waste management wings," the official said.

Officials point out that even when the BBMP was in place, nearly 600 sanctioned posts had remained vacant for years. " Now, with the city divided into five corporations, decentralisation has increased the need for staffing at multiple levels," a senior GBA official said.

GBA Chief Commissioner M. Maheshwar Rao also confirmed the development to *The Hindu*.

Officials said the cadre review is aimed at assessing not just vacancies, but whether the sanctioned strength itself is adequate for the responsibilities that the new corporations are expected to handle.

Fund allocation for corporations keenly watched

This is the first Budget after restructuring; while experts demand formula-based allocation, the govt. likely to go for discretionary ad-hoc allocation

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
BENGALURU

As preparations begin for the State Budget for 2026-27, likely to be presented in mid-February, it is being keenly watched as to how the capital grants from the State government will be allocated between the five city corporations in Bengaluru.

This is the first Budget after the city's governance has been restructured. While urban experts and activists have been advocating for a formula-based distribution of funds setting a good precedent in the first year itself, the State government will likely go for a discretionary ad-hoc allocation.

The five city corporations have a wide variance in their revenue generation potential with the East Corporation expected to generate ₹912 crore and the North Corporation expected to generate ₹543 crore. The State government has repeatedly said that it would use its grants to bring parity between the corporations. However, there is no concrete answer on what basis these allotments would be made apart from 'more grants to corporations with less revenue and less to corporations which have a better property tax base'.

The State government says that it will use its grants to bring parity between the corporations. FILE PHOTO

A senior official said that the allocations to the various city corporations will be 'need based', taking into account pending, ongoing, and proposed new projects.

Clause dropped

The Brand Bengaluru Committee in its draft of the Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill submitted to the State government in July 2024, provided for a Finance Advisory Committee to the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) 'to help the corporations become financially sustainable and to make recommendations regarding how additional State grants-in-aid are to be distributed between the Municipal Corporations'. However, this provision was dropped in the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024. Srikanth Vishwanathan, CEO, Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, said, "A discretionary process, neither anchored in data nor in the voice of citizens, would be self-defeating. The GBA should put in place a basic scaffolding this year itself."

Fact sheet

Corporation	Projected property tax in 2025 (in ₹crore)
Central	659
East	912
North	543
South	733
West	580
Total	3,427

Many have also argued for years now that the State should also devolve taxes to the local bodies based on a formula and the city should get a share, however small, of Goods and Services Taxes, Entertainment Tax, Motor Vehicle Tax and Stamps and Registration revenue, generated in the city.

N.S. Mukunda of Bengaluru Praja Vedike, advocated for developing a ward level index accounting for infrastructure and human development indices, to guide allocation both from the State government to the five corporations and within these corporations to wards as well. "After we have elected councils in these corporations, we will invariably get into situations where the State government and a particular corporation will have opposing parties in power, and there will be allegations of partisanship. A party trying to perpetuate this system today for some short term gains will also be at its receiving end in the future. In the process, the city will suffer," he said.

Bengaluru NavaNirmana Party, gearing up to fight the upcoming civic polls in the city, has also demanded for a formula-based allocation that is transparent as well.

"We need a formula-based allocation, an independent commission of experts to arrive at the formula and for the entire process to be transparent," said Srikanth Narasimhan of the party.

Inter-State racket involved in forging invoices busted

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Enforcement Wing (South Zone) of the Commercial Taxes Department has busted a massive inter-State racket that was allegedly involved in making fake invoices and made fraudulent transactions to the tune of ₹1,464 crore.

Four persons have been arrested. Acting on specific intelligence inputs, officials uncovered a well-organised cartel operating across Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The racket involved commodities such as cement, iron and steel, and other construction materials, with forged inward and outward supply transactions generated without any actual movement of goods, said a statement from the department.

According to officials, the accused used fabricated documents to fraudulently avail and pass on Input Tax Credit (ITC), causing significant revenue loss to the exchequer. Coordinated search and seizure operations were carried out simultaneously at multiple locations in Bengaluru, Chennai, Vellore, and Pernampattu. During the raids, the officers seized 24 mobile phones, 51 SIM cards, two pen drives, bank statements, and several rubber stamps linked to different business entities.

Two brothers from Tamil Nadu, Irbaz Ahmed and Nafiz Ahmed, were apprehended from Pernampattu. Investigators alleged that the duo had floated several fake firms, including Trion Traders, Wonder Traders, Royal Traders, and Galaxy Enterprises, to generate bogus invoices.

Two more accused, Eddala Pratap and Revati, were arrested in Bengaluru. They allegedly created multiple shell entities such as Power Steel and Cement, P.R. Construction, S.V. Traders, and S.R.S. Cement Steel Traders to facilitate the fake transactions.

All four accused were produced before the Special Court for Economic Offences in Bengaluru, which remanded them in judicial custody.

Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, JAN. 05	
RISE 06:43	SET 18:07
RISE 20:14	SET 08:24
TUESDAY, JAN. 06	
RISE 06:43	SET 18:07
RISE 21:11	SET 09:12
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 07	
RISE 06:44	SET 18:08
RISE 22:03	SET 09:54

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	29	20
Mysuru	30	18
Bengaluru	26	16

Bengaluru Today
27ºC The weather will be dry. Day will be comfortable. Night will be cool and hazy.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
28ºC Morning will be cool with mist and haze. Day will be comfortable. Night also will be cool. Dry weather to occur.

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THE HINDU
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Woman dies in fire accident

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A woman was killed in a fire that broke out at her apartment due to a suspected short circuit.

The deceased has been identified as Sharmila, 34, a resident of Subramanya Layout in the Ramamurthy Nagar police station limits. Police said Sharmila, who hailed from Dakshina Kannada district, was working at a private firm in Bellandur. The fire broke out a little after 10.50 p.m. on Saturday. After noticing smoke billowing out from the apartment, neighbours alerted the police.

Police suspected that Sharmila died of asphyxiation. The exact cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained. Further investigation is on.

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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Share of psychiatric patients who did not receive timely care

80 in per cent. The Indian Psychiatric Society has expressed deep concern over the high mental health treatment gap in India, noting that nearly 80-85% of individuals do not receive timely or appropriate care. This stark reality was highlighted during the curtain raiser event of the 77th Annual National Conference of the Indian Psychiatric Society. PTI

Percentage increase in unsold homes in 2025 across top seven cities

4 in per cent. Unsold housing units rose to nearly 5.77 lakh units last year across seven major cities as supply of new homes exceeded demand, according to Anarock. Housing sales in these cities fell 14% annually last year. As per the data, the unsold housing stock fell in Mumbai Metropolitan Region and Hyderabad, but rose in Delhi-NCR, Pune, Chennai, Bengaluru and Kolkata. PTI

Share of MoUs signed in Tamil Nadu since 2021 under execution

80 in per cent. Tamil Nadu has attracted investments to the tune of ₹12.16 lakh crore since 2021 and about 80% of the MoUs signed by the government are under various stages of execution, State Industries Minister T. R. B. Rajaa said. He stressed nearly 80% of the MoUs signed as on date were under various stages of execution. PTI

Number of cities in Iran affected by sporadic protests

40 Sporadic protests broke out in the Iranian capital on Saturday evening, according to local media, which also reported intensifying clashes in the west of the country. The demonstrations first kicked off last Sunday when shopkeepers staged a strike over economic concerns, but have since spread in size and scope, with protesters making political demands. AFP

Yemeni separatists killed in fighting, strikes since Friday

80 At least 80 troops from Yemen's secessionist Southern Transitional Council (STC) have been killed in fighting with Saudi-backed forces and strikes since Friday, a military official said on Sunday. At least 152 members of the UAE-backed STC forces were wounded and 130 were taken captive, the official added. AFP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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The uncertainty after Maduro

The U.S. apprehends Nicolás Maduro to face charges of drug trafficking and narco-terrorism, following months of pressure on Venezuela; Republican hawks hope for regime change, but most of the government and military remain intact; removing Maduro alone is unlikely to transform politics and may spark challenges

WORLD INSIGHT

Andrew Gawthorpe

Venezuela's president, Nicolás Maduro, has been apprehended and flown to the U.S., where the U.S. attorney-general has announced he will face charges of drug trafficking and narco-terrorism. The U.S. military's operation to snatch Mr. Maduro was carried out in the early hours of January 3 and follows months of steadily mounting pressure on the Venezuelan government.

Now it appears that the U.S. operation to remove a leader it has designated as a "narco-terrorist" has come to fruition. But whether the capture and removal of Mr. Maduro will lead to regime change in the oil-rich Latin American country remains unclear at present.

The U.S. campaign against Venezuela is the product of two distinct policy impulses within the Donald Trump administration. The first is the long-held desire of many Republican hawks, including U.S. Secretary of state Marco Rubio, to force regime change in Caracas. They detest Venezuela's socialist government and see overturning it as an opportunity to appeal to conservative Hispanic voters in the U.S.

The second impulse is more complex. Mr. Trump campaigned for election in 2024 on the idea that his administration would not become involved in foreign conflicts. But his administration claims that Venezuela's government and military are involved in drug trafficking, which, in Washington's thinking, makes them terrorist organisations that are harming the American people. As head of the country's government, Mr. Maduro, according to the Trump administration's logic, is responsible for that.

During Mr. Trump's first administration, his Department of Justice indicted Mr. Maduro on charges of "narco-terrorism". Now U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi says there might be a new indictment which also covers Mr. Maduro's wife, who was taken into detention with him. The fact that U.S. law enforcement was involved in their capture reinforces the idea that they will now face those charges in a New York court, despite an early claim by opposition sources in Venezuela that Mr. Maduro's departure may have been negotiated with the U.S. government.

Frayed tempers: A supporter of Nicolás Maduro waves a national flag while standing on a median strip in Caracas, Venezuela, on Saturday. AP

THE GIST

- The U.S. apprehends Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro and flies him to the United States to face charges of drug trafficking and narco-terrorism, marking the culmination of months of mounting pressure on Caracas.
- Removing a leader through force or arrest has rarely delivered stable political outcomes, as past U.S. interventions show.
- Without nation-building or long-term engagement, U.S. goals of a non-socialist, stable government in Caracas are unlikely to be achieved.

What comes next?

The big question is what comes next in Venezuela, and whether either the Republican hawks or the "America first" crowd will get the outcome that they want: ongoing U.S. military presence to "finish the job" or simply a show of U.S. strength to punish its adversary which doesn't involve a lengthy American involvement.

The U.S. has discovered time and again in recent decades that it is extremely difficult to dictate the political futures of foreign countries with military force. The White House might want to see the emergence of a non-socialist government in Caracas, as well as one which cracks down on the drug trade.

But simply removing Mr. Maduro and dropping some bombs is unlikely to achieve that goal after nearly three decades of building up the regime under Mr. Maduro and his predecessor Hugo Chavez.

The Trump administration could have learned this lesson from Libya, whose dictatorial government the U.S. and its allies overthrew in 2011. The country collapsed into chaos soon after, inflicting widespread suffering on its own citizens and creating problems for its neighbours.

In the case of Venezuela, it is unlikely that the American military's strikes alone will be enough to fatally undermine its government. Mr. Maduro may be gone, but the vast majority of the country's governmental and military apparatus remains intact. Power will likely pass to a new figure in the regime. The White House may dream that popular protests will break out against the government following Mr. Maduro's ousting. But history shows that people usually react to being bombed by a foreign power by rallying around the flag, not turning against their leaders.

Nor would Venezuela's descent into chaos be likely to help the Trump administration achieve its goals. Conflict in Venezuela could generate new refugee flows which would eventually reach America's southern border. The collapse of central government authority would be likely to create a more conducive environment for drug trafficking. Widespread internal violence and human rights violations could hardly be portrayed as a victory to the crucial conservative Hispanic voting bloc.

If the Trump administration dreams of establishing a stable, pro-American government in Caracas, it is going to have to do more than just arrest Mr. Maduro. Bringing about durable regime change typically involves occupying a country with ground troops and engaging in "nation building". The U.S. tried this with decidedly mixed results in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Trump has pledged to avoid such entanglements and Mr. Rubio has said that, for now at least, the U.S. has no plans for further military action against Venezuela. Mr. Trump has a penchant for flashy, quick wins, particularly in foreign policy. He may hope to tout Mr. Maduro's capture as a victory and move on to other matters.

Nation-building failures

In almost no recent U.S. military intervention did the American government set out to engage in nation-building right from the beginning. The perceived need to shepherd a new government into existence has typically only come to be felt when the limits of what can be accomplished by military force alone become apparent.

The war in Afghanistan, for instance, started as a war of revenge for the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001, before transforming into a 20-year nation-building commitment. In Iraq, the Bush administration thought that it could depose Saddam Hussein and leave within a few months. The U.S. ended up staying for nearly a decade.

It's hard to imagine Mr. Trump walking down the same path, if only because he has always portrayed nation-building as a waste of American lives and treasure. But that still leaves him with no plausible way to achieve the divergent political outcomes he, his supporters and America's foreign policy establishment want with the tools that he has at his disposal.

Meanwhile, the U.S. president will face pressure from a range of constituencies from Republican hawks to conservative Hispanic voters to force wholesale regime change in Venezuela. How Mr. Trump responds to that pressure will determine the future course of U.S. policy towards the country.

Andrew Gawthorpe is lecturer in History and International Studies, Leiden University. This article is republished from The Conversation.

Banks speed up response time

However, technical shortcomings and delays in framing SOP for defreezing lien-marked amounts continue to trouble victims

Chetan B.C.
BENGALURU

Banks have finally begun assisting cybercrime investigators by reducing their response time, but technical shortcomings and delays in framing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for defreezing lien-marked amounts continue to trouble victims.

According to data accessed by *The Hindu*, the response time of banks to police enquiries and notices averaged 15 to 20 days in 2024, depending on the bank. In 2025, this has come down to about a week.

Pronab Mohanty, Director General of Police (DGP), Cyber Command Unit (CCU), told *The Hindu* that some banks have even brought their average response time down to three days, giving investigators a better edge in progressing cases.

Response time refers to the time taken by banks to reply to investigators' queries regarding account details, bank statements, and transaction records of accounts involved in cybercrimes.

"Unlike conventional crimes, where there are multiple leads, bank transactions and other banking-related aspects are the primary leads in cybercrime investigations. If banks delay information, investigations lag and the chances of cracking cases reduce," Mr. Mohanty explained, underscoring the importance of timely responses.

Police attributed the improvement to frequent meetings with bank authorities, which led to the appointment of liaison and nodal officers. According to senior police officers, investigators can now directly raise issues with nodal officers in case of delays, reducing time lost to unnecessary formalities.

Response time refers to the time taken by banks to reply to investigators' queries

The Criminal Investigation Department had earlier held a joint meeting with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and representatives of banks to highlight how long response times were hampering investigations.

However, the money recovery rate in cybercrime cases fell below 10% in the State in 2025. A senior cybercrime investigator said response time was only one step forward, as banks are yet to address several issues, particularly those related to mule accounts.

KYC norms and mule accounts

"The banks need to tighten their KYC verification process while opening accounts. Lenient verification has created loopholes, facilitating easy creation of mule accounts, which form the backbone of financial cybercrimes," the senior officer said.

In 2024 alone, more than 70,000 mule bank accounts had been used in Karnataka, and that figure accounted only for the first layer of mule accounts.

Another major concern is the lax monitoring of suspicious money transactions. A robust monitoring system could help flag cybercrimes at an early stage and improve the chances of intercepting the siphoned money. Over the past two years, there has been a trend of innocent individuals' bank accounts being frozen due to erroneous and mischievous reporting of cybercrime activity by citizens. When affected account holders approach banks, they are directed to the police.

However, in mischievous cases, there is often no FIR, leading to further complications.

"This issue has disrupted many small businesses in the State, causing financial losses. There have even been cases where school accounts were blocked," a police officer said .

In another scenario, cybercrime victims who recover their lost money after investigations are also facing account freezes. Once a victim receives recovered funds from a mule account, which is often linked to multiple cases, subsequent investigations may identify the victim's account as the last mule account, resulting in it being frozen. The victim then has to undergo the entire process again.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has drafted an SOP to address these concerns, but it is yet to be finalised.

Chitra Santhe reflects Karnataka's cultural ethos: Siddaramaiah

Aaron Nair
BENGALURU

Art is like a mirror reflecting the culture of the State, and Chitra Santhe has emerged as an important platform for artists and art enthusiasts alike, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Sunday.

He was speaking after inaugurating the 23rd edition of Chitra Santhe, organised by the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, on its premises on Kumara Krupa Road in Bengaluru. The annual open-air art fair, one of the largest of its kind in the country, drew thousands of visitors through the day.

Mr. Siddaramaiah said this was the eighth time he was participating in the Chitra Santhe as Chief Minister. He said that the parishath has been working consistently for the past 60 years to encourage artists and create avenues for the exhibition and sale of their works.

The santhe, he added, has now entered its 23rd year, with artists participating from around 22 States and four Union Territories, underlining its growing national footprint.

Museums dedicated to achievers

Highlighting the government's cultural vision, the Chief Minister said, "There was a demand in every district for museums dedicated to achievers from various fields, and I assure that the government would consider such proposals positively." He also drew attention to this year's theme, which is dedicated to the environment,

Mr. Siddaramaiah said that the government has launched an ambitious programme to plant three to five crore saplings every year. Ideally, at least 30% of any region should be under forest cover, while Karnataka currently has about 20% forest area, he said. "We will make sincere efforts to increase this," the Chief Minister said.

Visitors throng the 23rd edition of Chitra Santhe 2026, an annual art carnival organised by the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, on Kumara Krupa Road in Bengaluru on Sunday. K. MURALI KUMAR

A collection of paintings representing wildlife and cultural sport. K. MURALI KUMAR

Numerous paintings of artists being on display as visitors taking a glance. K. MURALI KUMAR

Referring to environmentalist Saalumarada Thimmakka, he urged citizens to emulate her. "If we truly wish peace for her soul, all of us must try to grow trees," he said.

Meanwhile, the santhe showcased a wide range of paintings, caricatures, pottery, sketches, postcards, jewellery, numismatics, and other creative works. Artists from across the country interacted with visitors, many of whom were keen to understand the stories and techniques behind the artworks.

Ajith, a painter from Pune, who was selected for the first time to set up a stall at Chitra Santhe, said the event offered a unique atmosphere. "I have attended art exhibitions in Mumbai and Pune earlier, but I like the ambience here," he said.

Vinayak Kalamkari, an artist from Hubballi and a regular participant for the past three years, said that the santhe had helped him grow professionally. "I have seen good sales. Coming here gives me an idea of the competition I may face in the future," he said.

Manoj, an alumnus of an art college, said artists considered participation in the santhe a matter of prestige. "Many of us have got the chance to improve our skills and gain visibility through this platform," he said.

Artists with their paintings.

A girl is getting a design painted on her face. K. MURALI KUMAR

Stone-pelting during religious procession in J.J. Nagar

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Tension prevailed in parts of J.J. Nagar on Sunday night after a stone-pelting incident allegedly took place during a religious procession near V.S. Garden in the J.J. Nagar police station limits. According to the police, the incident occurred around 8 p.m. when devotees were pulling the deity's chariot as part of a procession that began from the Om Shakti temple.

Child injured

The devotees alleged that stones were thrown at the procession from nearby areas, resulting in injuries to a minor girl. The child reportedly sustained a head injury and was shifted for medical attention. The devotees alleged that unidentified miscreants pelted stones under the cover of darkness.

Following the incident, Om Shakti mala dharis staged a protest in front of the J.J. Nagar police station demanding immediate action against the miscreants. The police said that an FIR has been registered based on the complaint lodged by the devotees and that an investigation is under way.

Additional police forces were deployed at the incident spot and near the police station, and security was tightened to prevent any escalation. Authorities have appealed to the public to maintain peace and assured strict action against those who were behind the incident.

8-month-old baby rescued from alleged sacrificial ritual

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Members of the Child Welfare Committee and the district police rescued an eight-month-old boy on Saturday, following a complaint of suspected ritual sacrifice for wealth.

According to the police and child protection sources, officials from Childline (1098) and the District Child Protection Unit acted on an anonymous tip that a child was about to be killed as part of the ritual. They raided the house located in Janatha Colony, Sulibele village, and rescued the baby.

An investigation is under way into the circumstances of the attempted sacrifice and the alleged adoption and child-buying arrangements

Adoptive parents

Officials found that a couple, the baby's adoptive parents, had dug a hole and placed a coconut, incense sticks, and other puja items. They had allegedly adopted the baby from a migrant worker couple from Kolar without following legal procedures. Both couples have been detained by the Sulibele police.

The child, reportedly stable, is undergoing a medical examination.

An investigation is under way into the circumstances of the attempted sacrifice and the alleged adoption and child-buying arrangements.

UNION BANK OF INDIA
(A Government of India Undertaking)
Regional Office : 2254, Kousalya, 3rd Floor, Vinoba Road, Mysuru-570005

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/ charged to the Secured Creditor, the symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised officer of **Union Bank of India** (secured Creditor) will be sold on **"As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is basis"** on the date mentioned below, for recovery of dues as mentioned hereunder to Union bank of India from the below mentioned Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s). The Reserve Price and the Earnest Money Deposit are also mentioned hereunder.

Union Bank Of India, Kanakapura M G Road Branch, Opp. Govt Maternity Hospital, Main Road, Kanakapura - 562117 Ph: 9913265424, Mail Id: ubin0911747@unionbankofindia.bank.in

Name And Address Of The Borrower, Co-applicant And Guarantor:
1) M/s. R.R. Polypets, Proprietor : Ashwini S. Gadasahalli Village, Shivanahalli Post, Kanakapura – 562117.
2) Mrs. Ashwini, W/o Chandru, Krishnapura Village, Garakahalli, Channapatna – 562138.
3) Mrs. Parvathi W/o Anand M N, # 303, 4th Cross, SSA Road, Kunthi Grama, 4th Block, Cholanayakanahalli, Bengaluru – 560032
Amount due : Rs. 17,83,617-00 as on 31-12-2025 with further interest, cost & expenses
Description of immovable secured assets to be Sold : All The Part And Parcel Of Vacant Site In The Name Of **Mrs. Parvathi N,** Bearing Katha No. 388/33, Property No. 152900202800820355, Shivanahalli Village, Kasaba Hobli, Kanakapura Tq, Ramanagara – 562117, **Measuring East-West : 30 Feet, North-South : 40 feet, Total 1200 Square feet, Bounded On The East :** Site No.32, **West :** Site No 34, **North :** Site No 94, **South :** Road.

Reserve Price :
Rs.15,28,470-00 (Rupees Fifteen Lakhs Twenty Eight Thousand Four Hundred and Seventy Only)
Earnest Money to Be Deposited :
Rs.1,52,847-00 (Rupees One Lakhs Fifty Two Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty Seven Only).

Date and time of E-Auction : Date: 28-01-2026 From 12.00 NOON to 5.00 PM (with 10 min unlimited auto extensions)
Last date for submission of EMD : On or before the commencement of e-Auction.
E-auction website- https://baanknet.com

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale and registration and login and bidding rules visit : please refer to the link provided : https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/auction-property/view-auction-property.aspx and www.unionbankofindia.co.in

Date : 05-01-2026
Place : Mysuru

Sd/- Authorised Officer
Union Bank of India.

KARNATAKA STATE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD
Parisara Bhavana, No.49, Church Street, Bangalore-560001
Phone : 080-25581383, Fax : 080-25586321

No.: PCB/170/BLD/2023/2025-26/3971 Dated: 30/12/2025

INVITATION FOR TENDER (CALL-2)
(Through GOK e-procurement platform http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in)

The Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) invites tenders from eligible tenderers through GoK e-procurement platform http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in by The Member Secretary for the following work:

Name of the work: Proposed Construction of KSPCB Regional Office building at Koppala. Approx Value of the work: **Rs.255.02 Lakhs.** All payments such as tender cost, EMD etc., shall be made in e-payment mode only.

Tender Schedule/Dates

NIT Published Date	As per e-procurement portal
Date & Time for Pre-Bid Meeting	As per e-procurement portal
Last Date & Time for Receipt of Tenders	As per e-procurement portal
Date & Time for Opening Technical Bid	As per e-procurement of portal

For more details, please refer e-procurement website: http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.

Sd/-
MEMBER SECRETARY

DIPR/CP/4846/AKAR/2025-26

Our motto is to minimize waste generation through judicious use of natural resources

PUBLIC NOTICE

We are undertaking a title investigation on the immovable properties more fully described in the '**Schedule**' hereto and hereinafter referred to as '**Schedule Properties**'. The said title due diligence is being conducted for and on behalf of our Client who is desirous of entering into a development agreement with its present owners, namely (i) Mr. C Babu Reddy, son of Chikka Ramaiah Reddy, (ii) Mr. C.R. Venkatesh Reddy, son of late Rama Reddy alias Chikkarama Reddy ('**Owners**'). The Owners have represented to our Client that they are the absolute owners of the Schedule Properties and have unrestricted rights of alienation/development over the same.

Notice is hereby given to the general public that any person/s other than the present Owners, asserting any right, title, charge, lien, claim/s or any interest whatsoever in respect of the Schedule Properties are hereby called upon to submit to the undersigned, their claim/s, if any, over the Schedule Properties or submit their objections, if any, to the aforementioned transaction. The said claim/s or objections must be in writing, together with documentary proof to support such claim/s or objections and must be delivered to us at the address given below within a period of **15 (fifteen) days** from the date of publication of this Notice. If no such claim/s or objections are received, it shall be deemed that no one else other than the present Owners has/have any right, title, interest or claim whatsoever in respect of the Schedule Properties and our Client would be at liberty to proceed with the said transaction in connection with the Schedule Properties.

SCHEDULE
(Description of the Schedule Properties)

All that piece and parcel of agricultural lands admeasuring 5 Acres 25 Guntas (excluding 02½ Guntas of 'B' Kharab) comprised in Survey Nos. 28/2, 28/3, 28/4, 28/5, 28/6, 29/14 and 29/15, situated at Sulikunte Village, Varthur Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, Bangalore Urban District, more fully described in the table below:

Sl No.	Survey Number	Extent			Boundaries			
		Acres	Guntas	Kharab	East	West	North	South
Lands owned by Mr. C Babu Reddy, son of Chikka Ramaiah Reddy								
1.	28/2	0	08	0	Survey No. 28/3 and 28/4	Survey No. 29/14	Survey No. 28/1	Survey Nos. 28/4
2.	28/3 (Old Survey No. 28/1)	0	14½	0	Survey No. 28/6	Survey No. 28/2	Survey No. 28/1	Survey No. 28/4
3.	28/4 (Old Survey No. 28/1)	0	19¾	0	Survey No. 28/6	Survey Nos. 28/2 and 29/14	Survey No. 28/3	Survey No. 28/5
4.	28/5 (Old Survey No. 28/1)	0	19¾	0	Survey No. 28/6	Survey No. 29/14 and 15	Survey No. 28/4	Chokkasandra village boundary and road
5.	29/14 (Old Survey No. 29/11)	01	24	0	Survey Nos. 29/15 , 28/2, 28/4 and 28/5	Survey No. 29/13	Survey Nos. 29/13	Chokkasandra village boundary and road
6.	29/15 (Old Survey No. 29/12)	0	05	0	Survey No. 28/5	Survey No. 29/14	Survey No. 28/5	Chokkasandra village boundary and road
Land owned by Mr. C.R. Venkatesh Reddy, son of late Rama Reddy alias Chikkarama Reddy								
7.	28/6 (Old Survey No. 28/4)	02	14	02½	Survey No. 28/7	Survey Nos. 28/3, 28/4 and 28/5	Survey No. 28/16	Chokkasandra village boundary and road

Sd/-
Mr. SRINIVAS B.R., Partner,
DSK Legal,
Prestige Loka, No. 201, 2nd Floor, No. 7/1 & 7/7,
Brunton Road, Bengaluru – 560025, Tel: 080-69548770

Date : 05.01.2026
Place : Bengaluru

WORLD INSIGHT

Political instability, constitutional change, and the military's hold over Pakistan

Pakistan's political history shows a recurring pattern in which civilian governments struggle to assert authority amid deep social divisions and weak institutions; the appointment of Asim Munir as Chief of Defence Force reflects continuity rather than rupture in how power operates in the country

Dhananjay Tripathi
Tabshir Shams

On December 4, 2025, Pakistan witnessed something both familiar and unsettling. Field Marshal Asim Munir was formally appointed the country's first Chief of Defence Force (CDF) while still serving as Chief of Army Staff (COAS). Recent constitutional amendments handed him extensive authority. Many analysts quietly described it as a silent coup, as no military on the streets, no dramatic announcements, just a slow tightening of control.

By late 2025, Pakistan had already experienced yet another shift in real power. The 27th Amendment ushered in legal immunity, curtailed judicial oversight, and centralised unprecedented authority in the hands of the military leadership.

Gen. Asim Munir's rise did not happen overnight. After Operation Sindoor, where the public was told that Pakistan gained the upper hand against India, his stature grew. His meetings with world leaders, sometimes overshadowing the civilian Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, reinforced the impression that Pakistan's elected government was no longer steering the ship.

Big move: Field Marshal Asim Munir was formally appointed the country's first Chief of Defence Force while still serving as Chief of Army Staff. AFP

The first coup

Pakistan's early years were turbulent. After Partition in 1947, seven Prime Ministers came and went within just 11 years. Behind these political tremors lay a society divided along ethnic, linguistic, and regional lines.

One of the major factors behind political tension was language. The founding fathers made Urdu the national language, contemplating it to be a unifying force. However, Urdu was spoken by only 3-5% of the population. Bangla, on the other hand, was the mother tongue of more than 50%. In 1952, widespread protests erupted in Dhaka demanding the recognition of Bangla and protesting the systemic neglect of East Pakistan. This mobilisation on linguistic grounds gradually led to the rise of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman.

In 1958, a dramatic confrontation between Prime Minister Feroz Khan Noon and President Iskander Mirza opened the door for the military's entry into politics. Mirza dismissed the Prime Minister, imposed martial law, and appointed General Ayub Khan as Chief Martial Law Administrator. Gen. Ayub had his own ambitions. Within weeks, he ousted Mirza, sent him abroad, and assumed control.

Gen. Ayub justified the takeover in his political autobiography, *Friends not Masters*. "From a soldier's position. There would be large-scale disturbances across the country, and the civil authority, already groaning under the heels of politicians, would be incapable of dealing with the situation. It was the Army alone that could step into the breach." Thus, by imposing martial law, Gen. Ayub thought he was shaping Pakistan's destiny.

In 1959, Gen. Ayub declared himself Field Marshal without having won any war. It was Field Marshal Ayub Khan, who later planned Operation Gibraltar and Grand Slam in 1965. Operation Gibraltar was to invoke a local uprising in Kashmir, while Grand Slam aimed to capture Akhnoor, which, according to him, was the "jugular vein of India". These plans failed. The war that followed left Pakistan shaken, and Gen. Ayub politically vulnerable and unpopular across the country.

From Ayub to Yahya Khan

As the 1960s drew to a close, Ayub's rule became increasingly fragile. Economic inequality grew, protests erupted, and the once-popular military ruler found himself unwelcome on the streets. In 1969, exhausted and isolated, he handed power to another military chief, General Yahya Khan.

Gen. Yahya presided over Pakistan's first general elections in 1970, a moment filled with promise. But when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman won a majority in East Pakistan, while Zulfikar Ali Bhutto dominated the West, the military and the West Pakistani elite refused to accept the democratic outcome. What followed was brutal repression in East Pakistan, a mass uprising, and eventually the 1971 war with India that ultimately left Pakistan divided, with the emergence of Bangladesh. The defeat and surrender in Dhaka dealt a severe blow to Pakistan's national psyche. Facing public anger and opposition within the army, Gen. Yahya stepped down in December 1971.

The Zia years

As Pakistan attempted to rebuild, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto emerged as the political leader. But even Bhutto's charisma and brilliance could not bridge Pakistan's internal divides. His political style alienated various groups, especially Urdu-speaking citizens who felt marginalised. Moreover, the disputed 1977 elections plunged the country into chaos.

At this juncture, Army Chief General Zia-ul-Haq seized power under Operation Fair Play, ousted Bhutto, and later sent him to the gallows – a wound that still aches in Pakistan's collective memory.

Gen. Zia ruled for 11 years. Always smiling in photographs, he combined discipline and ruthlessness. Under his regime, blasphemy laws were tightened, jihadist ideology took root, textbooks were rewritten, and opponents were crushed. Contrarily, Pakistan's economic growth improved, but Ayesha Siddiqa, in *Military Inc.*, calls it "rentier economic growth," fuelled by foreign aid and the Afghan jihad rather than domestic strength. Smuggling networks, weapons trafficking, and informal markets flourished under Gen. Zia. It was also Gen. Zia who planned terrorism in Kashmir.

His death in a mysterious plane crash in 1988 ended an authoritarian era, but not the military's hold over Pakistan's destiny.

A General as Chief Executive

Benazir Bhutto won the 1988 elections, becoming the hope of a wounded nation. But the Army establishment soon clipped her wings, and her government fell within two years. The main reason was that Benazir was asserting herself and developing differences with the then Army chief Mirza Aslam Beg.

The 1990s saw a cycle of hope and disappointment. Governments fell one after another – Sharif, Benazir, Sharif again – as Pakistan struggled to define democracy. In 1999, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif reached out to India. The image of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's bus rolling into Lahore inspired many across South Asia. But while the leaders extended hands of peace, the Pakistani Army was planning something else. General Pervez Musharraf secretly launched Operation Koh-e-Paima (Kargil), hoping to seize strategic heights in Kashmir. This operation, carried out during India's peace efforts, damaged Pakistan's credibility and destroyed trust between Gen. Musharraf and Mr. Sharif. By October 1999, Gen. Musharraf overthrew the elected government.

Unlike past dictators, Gen. Musharraf presented himself as a reformer, promoting media openness, decentralisation, and "enlightened moderation." But beneath the modern veneer, the military footprint remained strong. A series of crises, the suspension of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, the Lal Masjid siege, and Benazir's tragic assassination eroded Gen. Musharraf's support. His party collapsed in the 2008 elections, and he stepped aside.

From favourite to foe

Between 2008 and 2018, Pakistan saw four Prime Ministers – Yosuf Raza Gilani, Raja Pravez Ashraf, Nawaz Sharif, and Shahid Khaqan Abbasi – none completing a full term. The civilian-military tension remained a defining feature of governance.

In 2018, Imran Khan, once the Army's favourite, rose to power with promises of reform and justice. Many in the Pakistani army believed he would be different. But like Bhutto and Mr. Nawaz, he eventually challenged the very institution that had helped elevate him. The moment he tried to assert autonomy, he faced resistance. Mr. Imran Khan became the first Pakistani Prime Minister to be removed through a no-confidence vote. Soon after, he was entangled in court cases, his party's election symbol was stripped, and he was jailed.

Yet in the 2024 elections, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-backed independents won more than 90 seats, a testament to his enduring popularity. Even so, a coalition led by Shehbaz Sharif, supported implicitly by the Army, formed the government.

Mr. Imran Khan remains popular but powerless, a reminder that in Pakistan, public support alone does not guarantee political survival.

Why the pattern persists

Since its birth, Pakistan's civilian governments have struggled to control the state. The early loss of Jinnah, deep ethnic and linguistic divides, corruption, radicalisation, geopolitical entanglements, and the persistent weakness of civilian institutions have all allowed the military to emerge as the country's most cohesive and powerful organisation.

The rise of Gen. Asim Munir is, therefore, not extraordinary. It is simply another chapter in the same story.

Until Pakistan rebuilds its political institutions, heals its internal divides, and strengthens civilian governance, the cycle will continue, and the military will remain the shadow behind every government – silent, steady, and always present.

Dhananjay Tripathi Teaches International Relations and Tabshir Shams is Pursuing his MA in International Relations, South Asian University, New Delhi

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

She sounded contrite after the meeting

It will take you a couple of months to learn the ropes

S. Upendran

What is the meaning and origin of the expression 'know one's ropes'? (J. Aditya, Chennai)

An individual who 'knows the ropes' is someone who is experienced; he is not only good at his job, but also knows the rules and regulations. He is someone who can get things done, and also, guide others.

If you have problems, talk to Sharma. He is patient and knows the ropes.

A person who has just joined a profession and needs to figure out how things are done, has to 'learn the ropes'.

As to the origin, both come from the world of sailing. In the past, when ships depended on the wind to get from one place to another, one of the important things that every sailor had to learn was how to tie different types of knots. When he became proficient, he applied the newly-acquired skill in securing the various sails and masts of a ship.

How is the word 'contrite' pronounced? (S. Dilip, Vellore)

How you pronounce the word depends on which side of the Atlantic you are from. The British tend to pronounce the first vowel like the 'a' in 'china', and then rhyme the second syllable with 'right', 'bright' and 'fright'. They pronounce the word 'ken-TRITE', with the stress on the second syllable. Many Americans, on the other hand, rhyme the first syllable with 'con', 'don' and 'on'; they pronounce the word CON-trite, with the stress on the first syllable. The word comes from the Latin 'conterere', meaning 'to grind or wear down'. Nowadays, the word is mostly used to mean to feel extremely sorry about something bad you have said or done – there is a sense of genuine regret in your apology.

Meera looked and sounded contrite when she apologised.

The Minister was adamant that he had done nothing to be contrite about.

What is the meaning of 'Gen Z stare'? (S. Mukesh, Lucknow)

Every generation born after the Second World War has been given a label. Those born between mid 1940s and 1960s are called 'Baby boomers'; the generations that followed are labelled 'Generation X' (1965-79), Generation Y (1980-95), and Generation Z (1996-2014), respectively. We all have something good and bad to say about the generation that follows ours. As far as Gen Z is concerned, one thing that everyone agrees on is that the people born during this period are tech-savvy. But the problem is, these individuals are so dependent on their computers, cell phones, etc. that they are at a loss without them.

When they are asked a very simple question like 'How may I help you?', they merely look at the individual awkwardly and provide no verbal response. The expressionless stare that the people of this generation give when asked a simple question is known as the 'Gen Z stare'. It is an expression coined by social media.

When he asks his students questions about their plans, all he gets is the Gen Z stare.

All parents have experienced the Gen Z stare.

upendrankye@gmail.com

THE DAILY QUIZ

A quiz on former India cricketer Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi on his 85th birth anniversary

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

V. V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1
He became the Nawab of Pataudi in 1952 on the death of his father. Where is Pataudi located in independent India?

QUESTION 2
Mansur Ali Khan was an Oxford Blue and the first Indian captain there. At which Oxford college did he study?

QUESTION 3
Why is July 1, 1961, an important date in the life and career of Mansur Ali Khan?

QUESTION 4
Following an injury to regular skipper Nari Contractor, Mansur Ali Khan became the youngest Test captain ever at 21 years and 77 days. Against which country?

QUESTION 5
Thanks to his superb athletic ability and speed while (particularly) patrolling the cover area, what nickname was given to him?

QUESTION 6
Under his captaincy, India scored its first-ever series win overseas in 1968. Against which country?

QUESTION 7
Name his popular actor wife and son.

Visual Question:
Name the trophy, instituted in 2007 to mark India's 75th anniversary of its first-ever Test against England, that Mansur Ali Khan is handing over to Rahul Dravid. GETTY IMAGES

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Many years ago, a couple of paintings of this Post-Impressionist artist were stolen from a museum in Amsterdam, but they were also recovered quickly. This artist died by suicide. Name the artist. **Ans: Van Gogh**
2. Last year, a gang of thieves broke into the Louvre Museum in Paris and stole the French crown jewels. Some of them belonged to an empress, who was the wife of Napoleon III. **Ans: Eugénie**
3. Some people believe that this painting by da Vinci shot further to fame only after it was stolen. Today, it can be found in a museum in a bulletproof glass display case and visitors are allowed to stare at it only for about 15 seconds. **Ans: Mona Lisa**
4. This painting has been stolen twice and recovered. It shows an agonised face against a colourful sky lit up by a setting sun. **Ans: The Scream**
5. In 2008, an 11th-century Chola bronze sculpture of Dancing Shiva was stolen from a temple in Tamil Nadu and sold to a museum in Australia. An art dealer was found responsible and emerged as a major antiquities smuggler. **Ans: Subhash Kapoor**
Visual: A stolen painting from Italy by artist X was found in a black bag by a gardener in 1997. X was a huge source of inspiration for the Indian designer, Rahul Mishra. Name X. **Ans: Gustav Klimt**
Early Birds: K.N. Viswanathan | Erfanally Oosmany | Parimal Das | Rajvi Sharma | M. Suresh Kumar

Word of the day

Disparate:
fundamentally different or distinct in quality or kind

Synonyms: contrary, diverse, unrelated

Usage: *The report combines disparate ideas.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/disparatepro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /dɪspərət/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

99.4% of fair price shops automated

The automation system is part of a broader digital push to modernise the Public Distribution System and has been under way since April 2023

Darshan Devaiah B.P.
BENGALURU

The government has automated 20,741 fair price shops (FPSs) accounting for 99.4% of the total 20,862 FPSs in the State by installing electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) devices, strengthening transparency and accountability in the Public Distribution System (PDS), according to Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department.

The large-scale automation enables the electronic distribution of foodgrains through biometric or Aadhaar-based authentication, helping reduce leakage, preventing fraud, and ensuring that beneficiaries receive their entitled rations. The initiative is part of a broader digital push to modernise the PDS and has been under way since April 2023. Officials said that the ration card and database of beneficiaries in Karnataka have been fully digitised, with ration cards Aadhaar-seeded to facilitate seamless authentication. Under the system, beneficiaries can access their full entitlement by entering either their ration card number or Aadhaar number into the ePoS device at the FPS, followed by biometric verification using fingerprints or iris scans. "The digitised system ensures that beneficiaries can receive foodgrains with minimal human intervention," an official told *The Hindu*, adding that the platform also enables access to allied digital initiatives such as One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC), the Mera Ration App, Anna Sahayata, and other welfare services. According to officials, the ePoS devices provide a single handheld solution for retailers, wholesalers, and field operators to manage sales, billing, inventory tracking, weighing, and digital payments. This integrated approach not only improves efficiency but also acts as a strong deterrent against malpractices at fair price shops. "Biometric authentication linked to Aadhaar plays a key role in eliminating "ghost beneficiaries" and curbing the diversion of subsidised foodgrains into the open market. Each transaction is recorded electronically and uploaded in real time to a central server, enabling end-to-end computerisation of the supply chain. This allows officials to monitor distribution at various levels, reducing dependence on manual registers and limiting the scope for manipulation," the official explained.

The large-scale automation enables the electronic distribution of foodgrains through biometric or Aadhaar-based authentication, helping reduce leakage, preventing fraud, and ensuring that beneficiaries receive their entitled rations. FILE PHOTO

EPoS devices provide a single handheld solution for retailers, wholesalers, and field operators

PDS digitisation in Karnataka

- Total fair price shops: 20,862
- Automated ones: 20,741
- Automation coverage: 99.4%
- Technology used: **Electronic Point of Sale devices**
- Authentication: **Aadhaar-based biometric verification** (fingerprint/iris)
- Ration cards: **Fully digitised and Aadhaar-seeded**

Prevents malpractice

Many ePoS systems are also integrated with electronic weighing machines, ensuring that beneficiaries receive the exact quantity of foodgrains they are entitled to and preventing under-weighing by dealers, officials said.

The automation drive aligns with directions from the Centre, which has asked all States to implement a comprehensive smart PDS system by March 2026. In a reply tabled in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Nimuben Jayantibhai Bambhaniya said that 100% digitisation of ration card and beneficiary databases has been completed across all States and Union Territories, with 99.9% of ration cards Aadhaar-seeded nationwide.

Two more held for posting obscene content against Darshan's wife

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Cybercrime police have taken two more individuals into custody in connection with a case involving the posting of obscene and derogatory content on social media platforms targeting the wife of the arrested Kannada actor Darshan and her family.

The case was registered based on a complaint filed on December 24, 2025, by Vijayalakshmi, wife of actor Darshan. In her complaint, she alleged that more than 18 people had been posting obscene, defamatory and derogatory posts, comments and messages against her and her family on various social media platforms.

During the initial phase of the probe, the police secured two accused.

As the investigation progressed, on Sunday, the police took into custody two more accused identified as Nagaraj Gullappa Talwar, 23, petrol bunk manager and a resident of Keshavpur, Hubballi, and Prashanth Talwar, 23, auditor and a resident of Yalavalli, Dharwad.

Further investigation is on, the police said.

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Ultra-luxury hotel at KIA; RFP issued for conducting feasibility study

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

An Ultra-Luxury Hotel at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) could be in the offing in the future as the Bangalore Airport Hotel Limited (BAHL) is exploring possibilities of implementing such a project. The BAHL, which is one of the subsidiaries of the Bangalore International Airport Limited that operates the airport, has floated a Request for Proposal (RFP) for conducting a feasibility study for the project. "Conducting the feasibility study for a luxury/ultra-luxury hotel project at KIA, Bengaluru, for the BAHL," the RFP stated.

If this hotel project comes up, it will be in addition to the Taj Bangalore and another project which is currently being developed on the airport premises. While the Taj Bangalore, a five-star hotel, which is located 250 metres from the Terminal-1 with 370 rooms is already functioning, a 775-room Combo Hotel (Vivanta and Ginger), which is under construction, is expected to be operational later this year. According to the Bangalore Airport City Limited a demand study had shown a potential to develop up to 5,200 keys (accommodation units) in total to cater to the needs within the airport city. A senior official associated with the projects had earlier told *The Hindu* that there was a huge scope of the hospitality industry on the airport premises.

A smooth transition

As many students prepare to enter the workforce in 2026, here are some tips to close the readiness gap

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Ponmythili Muralidharan

In a few months, thousands of final-year students across India will step out of their campuses and into the workplace. Some may already have their placement offers, and many more will receive theirs soon; a moment filled with relief, pride, and the feeling that life is finally moving forward.

Ari and Sri felt the same. After months of interviews, preparation and uncertainty, their offers arrived like a long-awaited victory. But what they did in the days between receiving the offer and joining the organisation shaped everything that followed.

Different ways

Ari moved into the familiar post-offer comfort zone that many students slip into. The interviews were over, the goal had been achieved and the pressure had eased. Ari enjoyed the praise and believed that learning would begin after joining. For many students, the offer letter feels like a finish line.

Sri also celebrated, but in a different way. To him, the offer letter felt like a doorway, not the destination. He spent time reading up on the organisation, understanding its products and services, refreshing important concepts, and completing a short online course related to the role. He reached out politely to a future colleague. Only a few students do this but, when they do, the transition becomes smoother and the first week feels far less overwhelming.

Across organisations, seniors often wonder how new entrants will adapt. This does not come from judgment. It is a mix of curiosity and concern because the workplace they entered years ago looked very different from the one that youngsters today will enter. In my leadership sessions, I hear something consistent from senior managers. They admire Gen Z's intelligence, courage and speed. What they worry about is not whether they can do the job. They wonder whether they will settle in well, learn steadily, and show consistency.

Satya Nadella captures the essence of this when he talks about the value of being a learner. His reminder that the learn-it-all will always outperform the know-it-all is especially relevant to those preparing for their first job. Indra Nooyi often says that the first step to improving an organisation is improving ourselves.

Consistent behaviours

Organisations do not expect mastery on the first day. They look for sincerity, humility, and a willingness to understand how things work. For young professionals, that improvement can begin before Day One. Research from McKinsey in 2023 also shows that even a little preparation before joining helps new employees learn faster, adapt better, and experience less stress in their initial weeks.

Students today constantly hear about productivity hacks, communication styles, and success habits. But early success comes from certain consistent behaviours: listening fully, respecting time, asking thoughtful questions, preparing before meetings, and completing small tasks with care. These habits quietly build trust and create a strong foundation for growth.

Those who begin like Sri often say that they settled in faster, understood the team sooner, felt more confident in meetings, and handled the early days with less stress. Those who begin like Ari are not wrong. They just take a little longer to find their rhythm. The difference is not about talent or capability. It is about the small choices made in the quiet days before joining.

Beginning like Sri does not require intense study. It requires small, meaningful steps. Reading about the organisation, refreshing one important skill, learning the basics of a new tool, completing a short certification, and setting a simple routine can make a young professional feel grounded and ready.

As you prepare to enter your first job, it helps to remember that the offer letter is not the end of the journey. It is the beginning. The days before joining are a chance to build clarity, understand the workplace and prepare your mind to grow. You do not need to prove anything on your first day. Begin quietly and steadily. Let your early actions show that you value the opportunity, you are ready to learn, and you are prepared to begin well. The future that unfolds will be shaped by how you choose to step into it.

The writer is Junior Faculty-Organisation Behaviour and Human Resource at Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai.

SCHOLARSHIPS

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An initiative from Haleon India
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Application: Online
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www.b4s.in/edge/SSPPS5

Science Academies Summer Research Fellowship
A collaborative initiative between the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bengaluru; Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi; and National Academy of Sciences, India, Prayagraj
Eligibility: Students from Class 10 up to PG who are pursuing STEM subjects and have minimum average of 65% in core subjects
Rewards: Guidance of experienced mentors.
Application: Online
Deadline: January 31
www.b4s.in/edge/SASR1

IIIT-Hyderabad Amgen Scholars Programme
A joint initiative from Amgen India and Harvard University.
Eligibility: Students who have completed at least one year of an undergraduate programme by June 7, 2026 and have Maths as a subject and demonstrate proficiency in English.
Rewards: $2,000 plus benefits
Application: Online
Deadline: February 1
www.b4s.in/edge/IHSP1

Courtesy: Buddy4study.com

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G. Janardhana Reddy

Janardhana Reddy seeks 'Z' category security

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Close on the heels of a clash in front of his house that claimed the life of a Congress worker, BJP MLA and mining baron G. Janardhana Reddy has written to Chief Minister, Home Minister, and the Director-General of Police seeking 'Z' category or equivalent security to him and his family, by stating that he is facing a serious threat to life.

Alleging police failure, he said that the government itself would be responsible if it failed to provide security to him and if there were further attacks on him. He has also written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah seeking protection by Central forces.

Meanwhile, commenting on Mr. Reddy's letter, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said that "he can have whatever security he wants. He can get security from Iran or U.S. or have his own security. On his demand for 'Z' category security, he said, "Very good. He can raise a 100-member security from the BJP cadre too."

Home Minister G. Parameshwara said that he had not received any letter so far, and that suitable action would be initiated after receiving the letter. "He (Mr. Reddy) has already complained to the police. The [Congress] MLA [Nara Bharath Reddy] has also lodged a complaint. The police will take action," the Home Minister said.

26 arrested in Ballari clash case

There was an altercation between supporters of MLA for Ballari Nara Bharath Reddy and MLA for Gangavati Gali Janardhana Reddy on January 1; those who have been taken into custody belong to both groups, say police

The Hindu Bureau
KALABURAGI

The Ballari Police on Sunday arrested 26 persons in connection with the clash between supporters of Ballari MLA Nara Bharath Reddy and Gangavati MLA Gali Janardhana Reddy late on Thursday, which led to the death of Congress worker Rajashekhar Reddy and left a police officer, police personnel, and several members of the public injured. Police sources said the arrested persons belonged to both groups involved in the clash.

According to a press release issued by the Ballari district police, six cases have been registered at the Brucepet Police Station in connection with the incident and are under investigation.

"Based on evidence collected during the probe, including video footage and other material, 26 accused have been identified, traced and arrested so far. All the arrested persons have been produced before the court," the office of the Superintendent of Police said.

There was heavy deployment of police ahead of the installation of Valmiki statue in Ballari. The row over putting up banners in connection with the event led to a clash between supporters of G. Janardhana Reddy and Nara Bharath Reddy, MLAs. SRIDHAR KAVALI

The police said investigation into the remaining aspects of the cases was continuing and further action would be taken based on the outcome of the probe.

Speaking to mediapersons at his residence on Sunday, Mr. Janardhana Reddy alleged serious lapses in allowing armed private security personnel to operate in public places without proper disclosure to the authorities. He said he would hand over the three bullets recovered from the spot to a police team investigating the case as per procedure.

The violence broke out outside the residence of Mr. Janardhana Reddy on Siruguppa Road in the Avvambhavi area following a heated exchange between Congress and BJP supporters over the installation of banners and buntings in connection with the unveiling of the Maharshi Valmiki statue at Valmiki Circle, which was scheduled for January 3.

What began as a verbal altercation soon escalated into a full-scale group clash involving stone-pelting and firing by private gunmen, resulting in the death of Rajashekhar Reddy.

We're considering handing over case to CID: Parameshwara

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The State government is mulling over the possibility of handing over the investigation of the Ballari firing incident to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). "If necessary, the government would hand over the case to the CID. I will discuss the issue with the Chief Minister before deciding on it," Home Minister G. Parameshwara told pressmen here on Sunday.

It may be noted that Congress worker Rajashekhar Reddy was killed after he suffered bullet wounds during a clash near the residence of former Minister and BJP Gangavati MLA G. Janardhana Reddy on January 1. The clash erupted over putting up a banner ahead of Valmiki Jayanti in Ballari town between supporters of Mr. Janaradhana Reddy and Ballari Congress legislator Nara Bharath Reddy. The deceased was a supporter of Mr. Bharath Reddy.

The Home Minister said that firearms in private possession had been seized and ballistic experts were examining it.

"Based on the bullet recovered, the police have already said that the bullet was not fired from a police firearm. It looks like the bullet was fired from a private firearm," he said.

On the allegations of Mr. Janardhana Reddy that private arms and petrol bombs were used to attempt to kill him, he said that the police would investigate all these aspects as part of their probe.

When his reaction was sought on Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar's remarks that violence had returned to Ballari after the return of Mr. Janardhana Reddy to the district, the Home Minister said, "I am not sure if it was a coincidence or not. Soon after his return, violence has taken place. We will investigate."

Incidentally, Mr. Janardhana Reddy returned to Ballari after 14 years since courts had barred him from entering Ballari over a slew of cases connected to illegal iron ore mining.

Regarding the well-being of Superintendent of Police Pavan Nejjur, who has now been suspended, Dr. Parameshwara said, "I was informed that he is in Bengaluru. He was mentally disturbed following suspension and on his way to Bengaluru he had taken rest at the farmhouse of a friend".

BJP will hold protest in Bengaluru today, says Ashok

The Hindu Bureau
KALABURAGI

The BJP stepped up its attack on the government over the Ballari group clash that led to the death of a Congress activist, announcing a protest in Bengaluru on Monday, demanding action over what it termed an attempt to murder Gangavati MLA Gali Janardhana Reddy.

Speaking to mediapersons after meeting Mr. Janardhana Reddy at the latter's residence in Ballari on Sunday, Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly R. Ashok said the BJP would organise a large-scale agitation in Bengaluru and submit a memorandum to the Governor seeking a high-level probe into the incident. "It is a complete breakdown of law and order in the State under Congress rule. The government is fostering a goonda raj. Despite the presence of several pieces of evidence, no clarity had emerged on who fired the bullets that led to the death. The government-constituted fact-finding panel was a cover-up exercise," he charged and demanded a probe either by a sitting High Court judge or the CBI.

BJP leaders with MLA for Gangavati G. Janardhana Reddy at the latter's residence in Ballari on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy said it was ironic that the Congress was claiming ignorance despite the incident being widely known across the country.

He also questioned the conduct of Ballari MLA Nara Bharath Reddy, alleging that his statements and actions had provoked violence, and demanded his immediate suspension.

Mr. Narayanaswamy also criticised the suspension of the district Superintendent of Police, alleging that senior officers who were allegedly responsible for facilitating the mobilisation of people had been spared.

Minister of State for Railways V. Somanna also met Mr. Janardhana Reddy separately during the day. During his interaction with reporters after the visit, he strongly criticised the Congress leadership, saying the banner-related violence had sent a "wrong message" to the State at the very start of the New Year.

"Valmiki statue unveiling programme was misused for political ends, disturbing peace in Ballari. The government must see that those responsible for the disturbance are brought to justice. It must also ensure that adequate security was given to Mr. Janardhana Reddy," he said, warning that if the State failed to act, the Centre would be compelled to intervene.

CPI(M) slams U.S. attack on Venezuela

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Communist Party of India -Marxist (CPI-M) workers on Sunday staged a protest here against the U.S. attack on Venezuela and the "kidnapping" of its President Nicolas Maduro and his wife. It has urged the Indian government to ask the U.S. to release the kidnapped Venezuelan President and has urged the United Nations to initiate action against the U.S.

CPI(M) State secretary K. Prakash alleged that the military intervention in Venezuela was to loot its oil and natural resources. "It is an attack on a democratically-elected leader of a sovereign democratic country. The attack on Venezuela is an attack on all countries in the world, including India," he said.

CORRIDORS OF POWER

Plea for a KSLU centre in Mysuru

The location of the Karnataka State Law University (KSLU) in Hubballi seems to be causing inconvenience to students of colleges in the Old Mysore region. Dinesh Gooli Gowda *(pictured)*, Congress MLC and vice-chairman of the Guarantee Implementation Committee, has urged the State government to set up a regional centre of the KSLU in Mysuru for students during the admission time.

According to him, opening of the regional centre would save a lot of time and reduce the financial burden on students, who otherwise have to travel to Hubballi and stay in hotels for a day or two every time for their academic registration, marksheet or other administrative work. The MLC has written to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar and Law Minister H.K. Patil and said that 176 law colleges are functioning across the State under the jurisdiction of KSLU. Over 30,000 students have enrolled in three-year and five-year law courses in these colleges. About half of these colleges are in the Old Mysore region, the MLC argued, urging for a regional centre.

Politics around a survey

The Congress government in Karnataka appears to be giving a political colour to an organisation after its survey report revealed respondents' trust (83.6%) in EVMs and the electoral process during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, which does not align with the party's line on the issue. The Mysuru-based GRAAM conducted the survey in 102 Assembly constituencies in all divisions of the State, in accordance with the terms of reference and methodology prescribed by the Karnataka Monitoring and Evaluation Authority (KMEA), a State government agency under the Department of Planning, Programme Monitoring and Statistics. The survey was commissioned by State's Chief Electoral Officer V. Anbukumar.

The party leaders not only criticised the survey, but some also alleged that GRAAM has links to the ruling NDA, without providing substantial evidence to prove the charge. Apparently at the behest of the government, the report, which was published on the KMEA website, was also removed.

The GRAAM, meanwhile, claimed that "any attempt to attribute political motives, personal affiliations, or external influence on GRAAM's work is factually incorrect and misrepresents the nature of research processes carried out on behalf of and commissioned by the government authorities."

Nagesh Prabhu

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

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				Sd/- Executive Engineer (South East)-1	
5	East-1	BWSSB/EE(E)-1/PB/4052/ 2025-26 Date: 01.01.2026 (Reserved for Category II (A)) (Call-2)	Rs. 21,54,191/- / Rs. 21,550/- / Rs. 36,29,346/- / Rs. 36,300/-	12.01.2026 upto 4.00 PM	14.01.2026 After 5.00 PM
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6	South West-1	BWSSB/EE(SW)-1/TO/PB/5115/ 2025-26 Date: 01.01.2026 (Call-3)	Rs. 70,81,099/- / Rs. 1,41,700/- / Rs. 57,20,994/- / Rs. 1,14,500/-	16.01.2026 upto 4.00 PM	17.01.2026 After 4.05 PM
				Sd/- Executive Engineer (South West)-1	
Office of the Chief Engineer (UWP), 5th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, KG Road, Bengaluru-560009.					
7	(WWM-P) -K&T	BWSSB/EE(WWM-P)-K&T/TO/PB/ 1242/2025-26 Date: 20.12.2025 (Call-2)	Rs. 9,68,565/- / Rs. 24,214/-	11.01.2026 upto 4.00 PM	13.01.2026 After 11.00 AM
				Sd/- Executive Engineer (WWM-P)-K&T	

The detail regarding the tender & participation in the e-procurement portal process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.** For further details contact the above signed office during working hours.

DIPR/CP/4840/Zen/2025-26

BANGALORE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY COMPANY LIMITED
(Wholly owned by Government of Karnataka undertaking)
(CIN-U04010KA2002SGC030438)

NOTIFICATION INVITING TENDER (NIT)
(Through e-procurement portal)

BESCOM invites tenders for "Providing Electrical infrastructure to the regularized IP sets by extending 11 KV lines, Erection of 25 KVA Star 1 (4 Star) rated Distribution Transformers and Extension of LT line on Partial Turnkey basis (25 KVA Distribution Transformer will be supplied by BESCOM) under item wise fixed price contract on PERCENTAGE QUOTING BASIS in BESCOM" with the following tender enquiry nos.

Sl. No.	Name of the Sub Division	Enquiry No's
1	Kanakapura USD	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT740
2	Nandagudi	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT741
3	Yadiyur	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT742
4	Sathanur	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT743
5	Bangarpet	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT744
6	Kanakapura RSD	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT745
7	Chinthamani RSD	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT746
8	Kodigenahalli	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT747
9	Doddaballapura Rural	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT748
10	Gudibande	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT749
11	Chitradurga urban	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT750
12	Channaptna RSD	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT751
13	Tumkur RSD-2	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT752
14	Bagepalli	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT753
15	Gowribidanur	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT754
16	Kudur	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT755
17	Harapanahally	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT756
18	Madhugiri	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT757
19	Koratagere	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT758
20	Sira CSD	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT759
21	Nittur	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT760
22	Molakalmuru	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT761
23	Harihara	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT762
24	Pavagada	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT763
25	Honnali	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT764
26	Sira RSD	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT765
27	Gubbi	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT766
28	Srirampura	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT767
29	Anagodu	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT768
30	Nyamathi	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT769
31	Teligi	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT770
32	Tiptur	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT771
33	Thallak	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT772
34	Hosadurga	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT773
35	Challakere	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT774
36	Chitradurga rural	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT775
37	Hiriyuru	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT776
38	Holalkere	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT777
39	Chikka nayakanahalli	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT778
40	Turuvekere	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT779

Availability of Bid documents: 12.01.2026 @ 15:00 Hrs onwards. **Last date for submission of bid Queries:** 23.01.2026 before 17:00 Hrs. **Pre-Bid meeting:** 27.01.2026 @ 11:00 Hrs. **Venue of Pre-Bid meeting:** Conference Hall, 3rd Floor, Belaku Bhavana, Corporate office, BESCOM, K.R. Circle, Bengaluru-560 001. **Last date & Time for bid submission:** 13.02.2026 @ 15:00 Hrs. **Opening of Technical Bids:** 16.02.2026 @ 11:00 Hrs.

The bid documents can be downloaded and necessary assistance can be obtained through the e-procurement portal from the website https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in

E-procurement Help Desk: Phone No: +91-8046010000 +91-8068948777, E-mail: support@eprochelpdesk.com

Aspiring bidders needs to be registered on e-procurement portal. Bidders can take the assistance from the e-procurement during working hours.

Sd/-
Chief General Manager (Ele.), Projects, BESCOM
E mail: cgmproject.bescom@gmail.com

For Electricity related complaints call: 1912
Download "BESCOM Mithra" Mobile APP

KTR triggers a row with comment on Rahul Gandhi

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president K.T. Rama Rao on Sunday sparked a fresh political controversy by stating that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi "should be hanged" for what he described as false promises made to unemployed youth.

Mr. Rama Rao was responding to remarks by Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy that former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao would have been "hanged in any other country" for allegedly damaging Telangana's interests in river-water sharing and for making money illegally through irrigation projects.

Addressing a gathering attended by legislators and senior BRS leaders on Sunday, Mr. Rama Rao said the Congress itself "must be hanged umpteen times" for what he termed historic injustices against Telangana.

He alleged that the Congress was responsible for the merger of Telangana with Andhra Pradesh despite the recommendations of the Fazal Ali Commission, the first States Reorganisation Committee.

Mr. Rama Rao alleged that Congress governments had demolished check dams and barrages to serve their political interests, harming water security. He said such actions had caused long-term damage to Telangana's development prospects.

Trial flight lands at Bhogapuram; 96% work done, says operator

An Air India aircraft, with Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu and Vizianagaram MP Kalisetti Appala Naidu aboard, lands on the 3.8-km runway; Minister hopes that the airport will spur economic activity in north Andhra Pradesh

The Hindu Bureau
VIZIANAGARAM

A validation flight was successfully completed at the Bhogapuram International Airport in Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh on Sunday.

An aircraft of Air India, with Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu and Vizianagaram MP Kalisetti Appala Naidu aboard, landed on the airport's 3.8-km runway around 11.10 a.m. The aircraft was given a grand welcome with a water salute.

District Collector S. Ramsundar Reddy, Joint Collector Sedhu Madhavan, and representatives of the GMR Group welcomed the Minister and others.

Smooth touchdown: Air India's first trial flight landed successfully at the Bhogapuram International Airport near Visakhapatnam. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

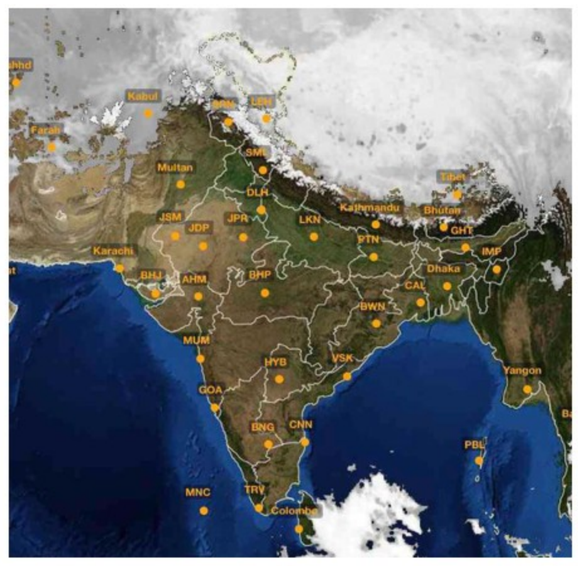
Mr. Rammohan Naidu said it was a historic day in the aviation sector and hoped that the new airport spurred the economic activity across the north Andhra region. He exuded confidence that the GMR Group would adhere to the deadline of June 30 set for the full-fledged operations of the airport. He said the government was taking steps to widen the roads to the airport.

GMR Visakhapatnam International Airport Ltd. (GVIAL) is constructing the greenfield airport, around 50 km from Visakhapatnam city, on 2,200 acres at an estimated cost of ₹4,725 crore. GMR Group deputy managing director I. Prabhakara Rao said 96% of the work on the airport had been completed.

According to him, 200 flights can be operated from the new airport daily. It can also handle 20,000 tonnes of cargo a year, and a cargo terminal is being built to export products.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Cold day conditions likely at places over Bihar, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh. Dense fog very likely at places over Assam, Meghalaya, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	--	22.4	8.5	Kozhikode	--	33.8	23.8
Ahmedabad	--	26.1	14.0	Kurnool	--	31.0	18.5
Aizawl	--	21.5	6.1	Lucknow	--	16.9	16.9
Allahabad	--	15.8	12.0	Madurai	--	31.5	21.1
Bengaluru	--	25.6	14.6	Mangaluru	--	32.5	22.6
Bhopal	--	18.5	10.8	Mumbai	--	28.8	21.5
Bhubaneswar	--	--	--	Mysuru	--	29.2	17.0
Chandigarh	--	12.0	9.2	New Delhi	--	17.0	7.6
Chennai	--	29.6	21.2	Patna	--	14.5	10.6
Coimbatore	--	30.2	20.0	Port Blair	--	29.9	26.2
Dehradun	--	20.6	7.9	Puducherry	--	28.5	20.8
Gangtok	--	14.9	5.7	Pune	--	27.5	15.0
Goa	--	33.5	21.5	Raipur	--	28.6	15.6
Guwahati	--	22.5	14.3	Ranchi	--	20.6	10.0
Hubballi	--	30	15.6	Shillong	--	14.6	4.2
Hyderabad	--	--	16.8	Shimla	--	14.0	6.8
Imphal	--	22.8	5.1	Srinagar	--	9.6	-3.2
Jaipur	--	18.5	8.8	Thiruvananthapuram	--	34.8	23.4
Kochi	--	31.8	24.4	Tiruchi	--	30.3	20.6
Kohima	--	13.8	5.0	Vijayawada	--	30.6	20.6
Kolkata	--	23.0	13.5	Visakhapatnam	--	28.0	20.1

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.83	.63	79	111	139	
Bengaluru	3	11	25	91	114	
Chennai	6	19	—	101	113	
Delhi	.22	.32	56	100	104	
Hyderabad	7	34	20	—	136	
Kolkata	9	95	58	319	162	
Lucknow	.10	.34	51	208	153	
Mumbai	.24	.94	23	198	126	
Pune	3	.63	92	282	—	
Visakhapatnam	.12	.72	34	—	194	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Gurugram, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 333 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 11.

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Murder accused found dead near Yellapur

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

He was facing charges of stabbing Ranjita Bansode, 31, at Kalamma Nagar in Yellapur on Saturday. She died on the way to hospital

Rafiq Yallur, who was accused of killing a Dalit midday meal worker at Yellapur in Uttara Kannada district, was found dead on Sunday.

Some farmers noticed his body in a forest near Yellapur and informed the police.

He was facing charges of stabbing Ranjita Bansode, 31, at Kalamma Nagar in Yellapur on Saturday. She died on the way to hospital.

The police, who had registered a case against the accused, said that it was likely that he had attacked her after she rejected his offer to marry him.

"He had approached her earlier also, but she had not agreed. He stopped visiting their home after her family warned him. It is not sure if they had a relationship," a police officer told reporters in Yellapur on Saturday.

Ranjita was a divorcee with a 10-year-old son. She was living with her sister's family. She worked in the local school as a midday meal staff. Shivaram Hebbar, MLA, visited the victim's family.

According to a complaint given by Akshata Bansode, the victim's sister, Rafiq was Ranjita's childhood classmate.

After she returned to Yellapur from Solapur in Maharashtra where she had been living, Rafiq was pestering her to marry him.

"She had stopped meeting him or taking his calls after her sisters and mother warned him. But he kept calling her repeatedly," Ms. Akshata Bansode, said in her complaint.

The police had registered a complaint under sections of BNS and under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Meanwhile, members of some Hindutva organisations protested against the killing of the woman in Yellapur on Sunday.

They protested in front of the police station and shouted slogans against the police. The victim's brother also joined the protest.

(If you are in distress or having suicidal tendencies, please reach out to these 24/7 helplines: Tele Manas 14416 or 18008914416 or Arogya Sahayavani at 104 for help)

Compound wall built by actor Yash's family demolished

The Hindu Bureau
SHIVAMOGGA

The compound wall that family members of cine actor Yash constructed, allegedly encroaching upon a private property at Vidya Nagar in Hassan, was demolished on Sunday, following a court order.

Lakshmamma, a resident of Mysuru, had moved the court, alleging that A. Pushpa of Vidya Nagar in Hassan constructed a compound wall encroaching upon her (Ms. Lakshmamma's) site at the same place. Ms. Pushpa, mother of actor Yash, owns a site at Vidya Nagar. She allegedly attempted to encroach upon the adjoining site property by constructing the compound wall.

The compound wall that family members of actor Yash constructed, allegedly encroaching upon a private property at Vidya Nagar in Hassan, was demolished on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The fourth Additional Civil and Judicial Magistrate of First Class of Hassan, in April 2025, ordered the respondents not to obstruct the applicant's peaceful possession of the property measuring 522.58 sq. meters in Satyamanagala Gram Panchayat. Now, the gram panchayat is part of Hassan City Corporation.

Devaraju, a resident of Hassan, who holds the general power of attorney (GPA) of the said property, removed the compound wall on Sunday with the help of earthmovers.

Speaking to the media, Mr. Devaraju said that he had been the GPA holder of the property since 2020. When the actor's family members constructed the compound, he objected and also informed the local police. However, the construction was not stopped. "We moved court for clearance of the encroachment. The court heard the matter, and the respondents did not furnish documents to support their claim. After informing the respondents, we have removed the compound," said Mr. Devaraju.

'No encroachment'

Sanjay, an advocate, speaking to the media on behalf of Ms. Pushpa, said that his client purchased the property through an absolute sale deed in 2020 and since then she had been in possession of the property.

Ms. Pushpa purchased the property legally through a registered sale deed. There was no question of encroachment or illegal construction.

"The claims of Devaraju, GPA holder, are false. He has no specific order from the court to either remove the compound wall or to take possession of the property. He has an order with respect to five guntas of land owned by Ms. Lakshmamma. We have filed an appeal against the order, and the court has served notices on the GPA holder. However, today he has removed the compound wall illegally, without informing our client," he maintained. Further, he stated that his client would question the action as per law.

FIR over 'missing' posters of Minister Krishna Byre Gowda

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The complaint was lodged by an assistant engineer of the Byatarayanapura sub-division

The Amruthahalli police on Saturday registered an FIR in connection with an incident in which posters were pasted in public spaces in the city, claiming that Minister for Revenue Krishna Byre Gowda was missing.

The complaint was lodged by an assistant engineer of the Byatarayanapura sub-division, alleging that unidentified persons had pasted posters on roadside transformers, defacing public property and damaging the city's aesthetics.

According to the complaint, the act also amounts to a violation of High Court orders prohibiting the defacement of public property. The posters were allegedly put up, and videos of the act were recorded and circulated on social media, which went viral.

Taking note of the complaint, the police registered an FIR. "Further investigation is under way to identify and trace the individuals behind the posters and the viral video," the police said.

36 accused in teen sexual exploitation case in Kerala still remain absconding

K.S. Sudhi
KOCHI

The trial of six accused in the case is set to begin on Monday; 21 have been convicted so far

Fifteen years into the registration of the Paravur sexual exploitation case in connection with the sexual abuse of a minor girl by 148 persons, 36 accused are still at large.

The trial of six accused in the case is set to begin on Monday. The trial court here has acquitted 13 accused as the survivor reportedly turned hostile or failed to identify them in the court.

The prosecution case is that the survivor, then a 16-year-old, was sexually abused over a period of around one year from May 3, 2010 with the support of her parents.

The father of the survivor took her to various locations and sold her for money. He also reportedly threatened to kill her and her brother when she opposed his acts, according to the prosecution case.

The sub-inspector of the North Paravur police station registered the case following a complaint filed by the girl and her aunt on March 7, 2011. The father of the survivor is currently serving a jail term after the court found him guilty of the offences booked against him a decade ago.

The case triggered widespread public protest and the then government had provided the survivor five cents of land and a government job for rehabilitating her.

The accused have been chargesheeted in 61 cases and trial has been completed in 34 cases.

Trial is pending in 10 other cases. The trial also saw 21 persons convicted.

Olive Ridley deaths raise concern as new nesting season begins in A.P.

V. Kamalakara Rao
VISAKHAPATNAM

This year's nesting season of Olive Ridley sea turtles is in full swing on Visakhapatnam's beaches. However, the discovery of turtle carcasses on the shore has alarmed wildlife enthusiasts and conversationalists.

On Sunday morning, the carcasses of three large Olive Ridley turtles washed ashore on the Muthyalammapalem, Thantadi, and Rajanapalem beaches. It is believed the animals might have drowned after getting entangled in fishing nets, possibly while migrating.

Experts said that the turtles need to surface for breathing every 40 to 45 minutes and can drown if caught in fishing nets. They called for stricter enforcement of the Andhra Pradesh Marine Fishing Regulation Act, including action against illegal fishing within 8 km of the coast.

Olive Ridley turtles were spotted on different beaches along the Visakhapatnam-Anakapalli coast on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

With the Forest Department planning to create four nesting zones next week, concerns have been raised about the impact of artificial lighting along the Visakhapatnam coastline.

Speaking to *The Hindu* on Sunday, Visakhapatnam District Forest Officer Ravindra Dhama said: "We are collaborating with The Tree Foundation to run four hatcheries along the coast. Special precautions will be taken during the Visakha Utsav (January 23-31) to ensure that the nesting turtles are not disturbed."

The Andhra Pradesh coastline is a crucial nesting ground for Olive Ridleys (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), which are listed as 'vulnerable' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The turtles typically nest along sandy beaches from December to April.

Kerala RTC to run 900 buses during Makaravilakku

The Hindu Bureau
PATHANAMTHITTA

The Kerala State Road Transport Corporation will operate a fleet of 900 buses to ferry devotees to Pampa during the Makaravilakku festival.

Addressing a review meeting at Pampa on Sunday, Transport Minister K. B. Ganesh Kumar said an additional 100 buses would be deployed based on demand. Extra parking facilities will also be arranged at Pampa hilltop.

Additional safety measures will be implemented in the next season to further minimize risks, he added.

Tragedy and farce

Trump's Venezuela strikes constitute the latest act of U.S. imperialism

Tragedy has followed every act of imperialism by the U.S., but under President Donald Trump, the consequences have also taken on a farcical character, typical of the Theatre of the Absurd. In 2003, the invasion of Iraq, on false premises to depose a dictator and "export" democracy, instead rendered the nation asunder, birthed outfits such as ISIS, and destabilised West Asia. The same playbook was used later in north Africa. In 2026, the world is witness to another tragedy that is also a farce: a repeat of the imperial script in Venezuela, orchestrated by a Trump administration that has traded coercive diplomacy for bombing campaigns and naval blockades. The apprehension and forced exile of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro is a flagrant violation of international law and also flouts Article 2 of the UN Charter. By conducting "interdictions" of oil tankers and illegally killing civilians on boats in Caribbean waters under the unproven guise of anti-narcotics operations, the U.S. has bypassed the UN Security Council to position itself as judge and executioner. This intervention is driven by a familiar calculus. The first is the resurrection of the Monroe Doctrine to re-establish U.S. hegemony in the Americas, an order that regimes such as Venezuela's sought to upend through alternative alliances with Cuba. The second is the desire to sever Latin America's ties with China, as the Maduro regime looked eastward for investment and oil trade. The third is the cynical drive to control Venezuela's very large crude reserves. These resources represent a "prize" for U.S. business.

In any case, the U.S.'s claims of victory could be pyrrhic. While Maduro's governance was authoritarian, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela retains a strong support base. The Bolivarian movement rose to tackle the rampant inequality fostered by previous U.S.-backed elite regimes. By forcibly installing a new order, the U.S. is not "liberating" the people but validating their fears of colonial looting. The hypocrisy is stark. While the Trump administration justifies Maduro's removal by labelling him a cartel leader without public evidence, it ordered the release of the narcotics-trafficking convicted former leader of Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernández, and helped facilitate the rise of the pro-Washington Nasry Asfura. The hope that a globalised, interdependent world would yield a stable liberal order following the Cold War has been repeatedly belied by the actions of the U.S. and Russia. Yet, by withdrawing from climate accords and escalating tariff wars, the U.S. has signalled a contempt for international norms that surpasses other egregious acts. Venezuela's invasion is the natural, violent conclusion of this isolationist-imperialist hybrid of Trumpism. If the international community remains silent, it ratifies a world order where sovereignty exists at Washington's pleasure.

High and dry

Social security for gig workers must be made accessible and secure in practice

The day after the strike by a lakh or so gig workers across India on December 31, the CEO of one platform commended police intervention to help the platform meet demand. This backdrop was unmissable shortly after the Labour Ministry had published draft Rules to operationalise the refreshed labour codes for public consultation. According to the Rules, these workers will be inducted into the new framework only on social security, not on wages or working conditions, rendering their strike more urgent. While the Code on Wages will apply across sectors and job categories, it excludes gig work from an 'employment' relationship for wage purposes. Instead, it is being treated as distinct and the platform is only obligated to make a gross contribution to a social security fund. The workers' demands, including over algorithmic rate cuts and opaque incentive structures, thus remain unaddressed. Similarly, the OSH&WC (Central) Rules are built around employer compliance via the Shram Suvidha Portal, but this is a conventional model that does not address concerns of app-mediated work. Only the social security changes are concrete. The draft Rules here require gig workers to register on a portal and every aggregator to upload details of engaged workers and update them every quarter. The Centre may also notify additional eligibility conditions; in any case, a worker must have engaged for at least 90 days with an aggregator or 120 cumulative days across aggregators in the financial year.

However, one calendar day can count as multiple days if a worker earns via multiple aggregators that day: if this helps workers qualify faster, it does not constrain platforms on how they organise work. The windows could also penalise workers for care-giving work or those responding to a demand slump beyond their control. To these ends, the draft Rules need to be redesigned so that the social security they promise is accessible and secure in practice. For instance, the 90- and 120-day thresholds must include explicit protections for illness, maternity and demand collapses, and should not lapse because a worker had a bad quarter. The Rules should also specify what benefits exist, how disputes will be resolved, the minimum benefits the Social Security Fund will support, and a time-bound claims and appeals process not dependent on platforms' goodwill. Finally, aggregators should give every worker a periodic statement of jobs, hours logged, earnings and deductions, and workers must be able to contest irregular data. Without these changes, the new regime will leave the insecurity that produced the strikes structurally intact.

Hubris and caution — China's posture as 2026 begins

Ashok K. Kantha,

a former Ambassador to China, is Subhas Chandra Bose Chair of International Relations at Chanakya University, Bengaluru, and Distinguished Fellow at Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), New Delhi

As 2026 begins, China presents a paradox: a nation wrestling with economic challenges yet projecting strategic confidence; a leadership tightening political control domestically while expanding its diplomatic and institutional reach abroad; and a system that is both anxious and assertive. For India, this Chinese posture and the shift in the stance of the United States toward Beijing and New Delhi have narrowed strategic space and complicated the management of a fraught relationship. India's diminishing prominence in the foreign policy calculus of Washington and Beijing alike adds to the complexity.

The shift in China's overall mood has been striking. Until late 2024, Track 2 dialogues revealed palpable anxiety among Chinese interlocutors about U.S. containment and economic slowdown. By mid-2025, a sense of regained momentum – sometimes bordering on hubris – permeated Beijing's strategic community. Many believed China had gained ground in a recalibrated great power competition with the U.S., managed escalation dominance more effectively, and secured tactical advantages in trade and tariff disputes. This confidence was bolstered by China's expanding influence in the Global South, its deepening alignment with Russia, and its ability to stabilise key relationships – with the notable exception of Japan – without altering core positions.

Yet, beneath this confidence lies a leadership aware of structural challenges at home and a difficult international environment. The Fourth Plenum in October 2025 and the Central Economic Work Conference in December saw President Xi Jinping doubling down on national security, technological self-reliance, and the "real economy" as organising principles, while persisting with exports as a key growth driver even as he spoke of boosting domestic consumption.

Economic strains and the turn inward

China's 2025 economic growth was weaker than official figures (about 5%) suggest. Domestic demand remained weak, and the overbuilt property sector continued to weigh on confidence. Deflationary pressures (producer prices in negative territory for 38 consecutive months), sluggish productivity and tepid corporate profits persisted. Local governments face fiscal stress, limiting stimulus options.

Instead of boosting consumption, Beijing reinforced a state-led model, prioritising advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, Artificial Intelligence (AI), green energy, and dual-use technologies. Massive industrial policy support aims for "whole-chain breakthroughs" and the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) underscores technological self-reliance and supply chain insulation.

This inward turn occurs even as China's export dependence grows to compensate for weak domestic demand. China's trade surplus crossed $1 trillion in the first 11 months of 2025. It is increasingly dominating global value chains in manufacturing across high-tech industries such as electric vehicles, batteries, solar panels and industrial machinery. This "China Shock 2.0" is generating serious disruptions for developed and developing economies alike. As IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva warned in December, China is now too large to export its way out of a slowdown without aggravating global trade tensions. For India, China's advantages in scale, technology and system-wide efficiency and upstream control of critical inputs (rare earths to battery precursors) have not only expanded the trade deficit, expected to exceed $110 billion in 2025, but also intensified vulnerabilities in sectors ranging from pharmaceuticals to electronics, green energy and rare earth magnets.

> The Chinese leadership is aware of structural challenges at home and in a difficult international environment; India must be alert and strategically patient

Domestically, 2025 was marked by further political consolidation. The leadership tightened information control, reinforced ideological discipline, and expanded the remit of national security. Yet, dysfunctionalities of the party-state were also evident in large-scale sacking of generals.

The PLA continued to expand its conventional and nuclear capabilities. Emerging nuclear doctrinal shifts, such as movement toward an "early warning counter-strike" posture, suggest a more assertive and risk-tolerant military.

The Great Power dynamics

The most consequential external development was the recalibration of U.S.-China relations under President Donald Trump's second term. Under the U.S. National Security Strategy 2025, China is no longer framed as a systemic rival but primarily as an economic competitor. The Indo-Pacific is no longer the strategic centre of gravity; the Western Hemisphere has taken precedence, reflecting a more inward-looking "America First" approach. However, America's military intervention regime change in Venezuela, which seriously affected Chinese interests and investments and elicited sharp reactions from Beijing, have shown that the U.S.-China strategic rivalry is intact.

The Trump-Xi meeting in Busan in October produced de-escalation, including modest tariff adjustments and a selective easing of export controls. These were transactional bargains, not steps toward a G2. Yet the perception of a "G2 overlay" – a shadow of tacit coordination – has serious consequences, as even limited China-U.S. accommodation can constrain the choices of other states.

For India, the implications are sobering. The long positive trajectory of the India-U.S. partnership has been disturbed by friction over trade, Russia, and Pakistan. The U.S. remains committed to preventing Chinese hegemony in Asia but is less inclined to prioritise relations with India as a strategic counter to China. Meanwhile, China believes it has gained relative advantage *vis-à-vis* the U.S., while Chinese interlocutors increasingly argue that India's interest in stabilising relations with China stems from turbulence in India-U.S. ties. These twin perceptions make China less inclined to accommodate India's concerns.

With Europe, instead of leveraging trans-Atlantic tensions to drive a wedge between Brussels and Washington, China adopted a tough posture – digging in on EV subsidies, refusing to curb industrial overcapacity, pushing back hard against EU trade-defence actions, and consolidating its strategic linkages with Russia. Europe, despite growing alarm over China's "strategic enabling" of Russia's war in Ukraine and fears of industrial hollowing out, found itself constrained due to economic headwinds, dependencies on China, and strategic distractions.

China's attempts to stabilise major-power ties were undercut by its harsh response to the Japanese Prime Minister's comment on Taiwan. Beijing signalled that its outreach has clear limits and that it remains unwilling to accommodate divergence on issues it deems sensitive.

Mr. Xi is attaching strategic priority to the Global South, positioning China as its leader and as a stabilising partner amid western retrenchment, and stepping up BRI projects, diplomatic initiatives and influence operations. But this expanding presence has also stirred unease over opaque financing, debt vulnerabilities, environmental concerns, and political leverage Beijing can derive from economic dependence. Even as China deepened its influence in Southeast Asia, the Gulf, Africa, and Latin America and pushed a China-centric institutional architecture through the AIIB, NDB, and expanded BRICS and SCO, many countries remain cautious about loss of policy autonomy.

China continued to treat South Asia as its strategic periphery and pursue a "two-ocean strategy" that normalises PLA Navy operations in the Indian Ocean.

On India-China relations

India-China relations in 2025 witnessed cautious stabilisation but no substantive progress on structural issues. The summit-level meeting in Tianjin and other high-level exchanges helped rebuild a damaged relationship. Yet, the situation along the borders remains stable but not normal. Disengagement has not been accompanied by de-escalation or de-induction. "Buffer zones" continue to restrict India's patrolling rights and grazing access. If these temporary arrangements become permanent, China will have achieved incremental gains consistent with its grey-zone playbook.

China's tactical outreach has not addressed India's core concerns. Negative signals included China-Pakistan battlefield collusion (Operation Sindoor), work on a massive hydropower project in Tibet near the border, denial of rare earth magnets, delays in clearing key components, and repeated efforts to flag territorial claims in Arunachal Pradesh. India has prudently opted for step-by-step improvement in ties.

China is likely to persist with its current strategy: managed competition with the U.S., stabilisation of major relationships along with hardball diplomacy, intensified outreach to the Global South, incremental assertiveness in maritime and border theatres, and prickliness on its "core interests". The PLA will persist with grey-zone tactics while avoiding major kinetic actions.

New Delhi must pursue calibrated engagement to reduce immediate risks while strengthening asymmetric deterrence and accelerating domestic technological and industrial capabilities. External balancing remains relevant, but its dependability must be conservatively assessed in an era of U.S.-China tactical accommodation. India must prepare for a long haul – clear-eyed, resilient, and strategically patient.

The views expressed are personal

Security camps, the game changer in the Maoist fight

Shashank Ranjan

is an Indian Army veteran (colonel) with substantial experience of serving in a counter-terrorism environment. He currently teaches at the O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonepat, Haryana

Maoism in India has been significantly curbed. The dip in Maoist-related violence, especially over the last two years, has restricted the insurgency to few pockets in the Bastar division of Chhattisgarh. Government data show that violent incidents have reduced by almost 90% from 2010 to 2025. The number of Left Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected districts fell from 126 to 90 in April 2018, 70 in July 2021, 38 in April 2024, 18 in April 2025 and only 11 in October 2025. Only three districts – Bijapur, Narayanpur and Sukma, in south Bastar – are categorised as most affected.

Maoists entered the Dandakaranya region (DKR) in the early 1980s due to mounting pressure in Andhra Pradesh. Thickly wooded and tough terrain, and abutting parts of several States such as Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Telangana made DKR the most appropriate 'rear area' for the Maoists, with the Bastar division as the hub.

A gradual change

The DKR of the early 1980s was characterised by several peculiarities that favoured the Maoists. Its geographical remoteness, rugged terrain, marginalised tribal inhabitants and the official policy of maintaining tribal belts as exclusive areas were the major factors that characterised the administrative neglect of the region. The governance deficit was the most crucial factor that enabled the Maoists to expand and establish their parallel government.

In addition, the state's focus on the extraction economy and the tribal struggle for '*jal*-jungle-*zameen*', provided the overall context to the conflict. The setback to Maoism has been a function of the inroads made by civil administration into remote areas under Maoist control. The game-changing initiative of the government has been the establishment of security camps in the remote areas, regions of erstwhile Maoist domination. Initial attempts to establish camps did face local resistance. However, local resistance subsided following the benefits that accrued to the local population. The advantages of the new camps have been multifaceted.

> The advantages have been many, helping the civil administration reach out to local populations

Path to progress

First, the camps enhanced the security footprint in remote areas. A boost in police to population ratio deterred the Maoists from operating with impunity.

Second, the reaction time for the security forces in response to emergencies was considerably reduced, putting the Maoists on the defensive. The security forces now operate with more confidence and higher motivation levels.

Third, the local population witnessed the security forces gaining an upper hand, which was also a psychological setback to the Maoists. The local population is more assured now that the wherewithal for their welfare and development is with the government and not with the Maoists.

Fourth, the cascading effect of the advantages gained by security forces improved the human intelligence (HUMINT) scenario for the forces in a zero sum manner.

Fifth, the camps have also seen the construction of roads, and erection of mobile towers, thereby transforming the local lifestyle.

Sixth, the civil administration has piggy-backed on the support provided by the security camps. The local population that till now had only seen a policeman or a forest guard as representative of the government is now seeing the collector, *tehsildar* and *patwari* reaching out to them. As progress is further consolidated along the axes provided by security camps, the future is both encouraging and promising. As a corollary, the appeal of Maoists has waned. The scope of capability development in terms of recruitment, weapons and ammunition acquisition and funding for the Maoists has diminished. Large numbers of cadres along with their leaders have either surrendered or have been neutralised by the security forces. It indeed is a matter of time when the physical presence of Maoism will cease to exist.

Implement constitutional guarantees

However, the challenge in the mid- and long term can only be overcome if the structural issues are addressed. Now that the local population is expected to come out of seclusion, rights-based issues will come to the fore. Several Maoists leaders who have surrendered in recent days, declaring their intent of carrying on with the struggle for the tribal cause in a democratic manner. The task at hand for the government hereafter becomes difficult, warranting transparent and mature handling.

Implementation of constitutional guarantees enshrined in Acts such as the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act and Forest Rights Act should form the basis of the approach ahead. Civil administration, in most of the areas that had minimal governance, has to start from scratch.

A task force with a prospective plan for the region, till 2047, as part of the Viksit Bharat vision, will not be too ambitious to ask for. The security forces have toiled, made sacrifices and managed the conflict well, giving a platform to the government to carry forward the mission for sustainable peace.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Imperialism as liberation

The U.S.'s detention of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro signals a volatile shift in global geopolitics, blurring the lines between judicial accountability and regime change. "Running" a sovereign nation — the U.S.'s line — evokes dark echoes of colonialism. U.S. President Trump's focus on oil companies fixing infrastructure suggests that economic extraction, more than democratic restoration, is America's primary motive.

Dr. Vijaykumar H.K.,
Raichur, Karnataka

Whatever the provocation might be, blatant disrespect for and a violation of international borders and sovereignty of nations cannot be condoned. Mr. Trump has lived up to his growing image of a global trigger-happy cowboy.

Dr. George Jacob E.,
Kochi

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

The struggle to count women's labour

Rajesh Ranjan
is a Chevening Scholar

Vrishti Shami
is a lawyer-researcher who writes on policy and law

In the poem, *The Woman's Labour* (1739), Mary Collier writes: "When Harvest comes, into the Field we go, And help to reap the Wheat as well as you. Or else we go to the Ears of Corn to glean; No Labour scorning, be it e'er so mean; But in the Work we freely bear a Part, And what we can, perform with all our Heart." It is a powerful way of pointing to how women's labour often goes unseen. A 2023 United Nations report showed that globally, women spend 2.8 more hours than men on unpaid care and domestic work. The struggle to count women's labour continues.

While domestic labour has increasingly entered the public discourse, the emotional and mental labour in sustaining relationships, managing household dynamics, and supporting the well-being of others continues to go largely unacknowledged. This uncounted labour which plays a critical role in the smooth functioning of families and societies, is rarely measured or rewarded.

Shirin Rai, a professor,argues that "...many who cope with this work in contexts of poverty and of violence, are constantly told that their everyday labour – both paid and unpaid to maintain the rhythms of life-ecology do not count in/as production. ... as a global society, we fail to recognise this labour in our everyday lives, and we continue to deny its appropriate inclusion in discourses about work, in our national budgets, and in policy frameworks".

This raises a critical question: what structural and ideological forces render this labour unseen and undervalued? Feminist scholars such as Isabella Bakker, Nancy Fraser and Shirin Rai have argued that economic and policy priorities have long marginalised care work by framing it as secondary to "productive" labour traditionally performed by men.

The privileging of male breadwinner employment, the relentless focus on GDP growth, and the emphasis on physical infrastructure investment over social infrastructure have all contributed to the systemic devaluation of care-related work. These priorities often result in the diversion of public resources away from services that support caregiving, such as childcare, elder care, and mental health services domains that are disproportionately occupied by women.

Antonella Picchio, a professor at Cambridge, argued that "the biological aspects of human reproduction were used to hide the historical and social aspects of the gender division of labour. The separation between the process of production and that of social reproduction of labour between men and women took new forms and shaped new power relationships within the traditional context of women's subordination". Thus, in our view, the act of non-inclusion of women's direct and indirect labour is a continuation of the subjugating practice of considering women's labour as non-productive. A closer look at global legislation and statutes reveals that the efforts to recognise women's labour institutionally are very scattered.

Few countries have introduced laws, constitutional provisions or policies recognising unpaid care work/domestic/emotional labour. Article 338 of the Bolivian Constitution recognises that work at home is an economic activity that creates added value and produces social welfare and wealth. Housewives are entitled to social security in accordance with the law. Trinidad and Tobago has the Counting Unremunerated Work Act, 1996 requires the statistical authorities to measure unremunerated work (housework, caring for children/elderly/disabled), break it down by gender, and assign a monetary value. Similarly, Argentina enacted a law recognising employment contracts for domestic workers where women can get pension credits (equivalent to social security contributions) for unpaid care work they have done raising children. But no law and policy recognises the mental and emotional labour put in by women to run the economy and the family.

Recognising women's labour requires a major policy shift

In India, there is still no legal framework that recognises or compensates this form of unpaid work, despite it being the backbone of families and, by extension, the economy. However, courts have begun to challenge this silence. In *Kannaian Naidu and Others vs Kamsala Ammal and Others* (2023), the Madras High Court ruled that a wife who performed household duties and cared for the family contributed, albeit indirectly, to the acquisition of family assets. Therefore, she was entitled to an equal share in the property. These efforts to recognise women's labour must be accompanied by a structural reconfiguration of gendered social relations, wherein men actively participate in and co-shoulder care responsibilities. Without such a transformation, the burden of unpaid care work will remain disproportionately feminised. It will either continue to constrain the full participation of women in the formal economy or force women from marginalised socio-economic locations to sustain the reproductive labour of households where other women from dominant groups engage in formal employment.

Any revaluation of labour must also encompass the often invisible factor of emotional labour, which plays a critical role in sustaining households, communities and broader economic systems, yet remains systematically unacknowledged in policy and practice.

The writers acknowledge the help of Professors Rachel Rose, Eve Dickson, Shirin Rai, and Chris Newfield, and also Prof. Vanza Hamzic and Rashmi Satyal for inputs

Kerala's battles with the SIR

What has been palpable from the beginning is the trust deficit

STATE OF PLAY

Tiki Rajwi
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Over the past weeks, Kerala has had a roller-coaster ride with respect to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. The element of amusement has been missing from it. Of the 2.78 crore voters who were issued forms during the house-to-house enumeration phase, 24.08 lakh found themselves excluded when the draft roll was published on December 23 under the Election Commission of India (ECI)'s extended time-table. A further 19.32 lakh electors on the draft roll are in limbo – 'no mapping' cases in ECI parlance – as they could not be linked to the 2002 SIR roll, which serves as the base list.

Kerala is now in the phase where claims and objections by electors are being filed on the draft and notices for personal hearings are being issued to them. The office of the Chief Electoral Officer (Kerala) has said that election officials have generated 17.71 lakh notices and served 18,915 notices in the case of the 'No mapping' electors. Election officials maintain that excluded voters, if eligible, can still add their names by enrolling afresh using Form 6, or, in the case of overseas electors, Form 6A.

The CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) government and the State's political parties have repeatedly blamed the SIR for an injustice where voters are made to feel that their citizenship is in doubt. Citizens who have been active voters for decades stand deleted from the rolls just because they have been marked in the Absent/Shifted/Dead (ASD) list as 'Untraceable' or 'EF Refused' (the ECI description for electors who decline to accept enumeration forms or return them). Political parties and individual electors have highlighted instances where such categorisations have been erroneous. The ASD list, in the case of some polling stations at least, has been outright unbelievable with over 500 voters listed as 'Untraceable,' 'Permanently Shifted' or 'EF Refused.' These issues have grabbed the headlines with several citizens, high-profile individuals included, finding themselves in the ASD list or in the grey, fuzzy zone of 'No Mapping' electors.

Barring differences in the data, what is playing out in Kerala is likely to find an echo in other States where the SIR is on. But the huge expatriate population in Kerala makes some elements of Kerala's SIR singular in nature. Political parties allege that little has been done so far to ensure the inclusion of overseas electors. They have also asked the ECI to allow authorised representatives to appear on the behalf of such electors if they are summoned for hearings by the Electoral Registration Officers (ERO).

The fact that the SIR coincided with the 2025 local body elections – an overlap that led to much of the protest against the SIR – has also led to inevitable comparisons. The voter roll maintained by the State Election Commission, which is responsible for the local body elections, listed 2.86 crore electors at the time of polling in December. The roll maintained in Kerala by the ECI, which handles the Assembly and Parliament elections, saw a dip from 2.78 crore voters to 2.54 crore voters after the publication of the draft SIR roll.

To be fair, the Kerala CEO has strived to make the SIR palatable and participatory by holding weekly meetings with the political parties and allowing a media presence. The CEO, Rathan U. Kelkar, has also said that all eligible electors will be included in the final list, to be published on February 21, and that there will be no harassment in the name of hearings. But what has been apparent and constant from the beginning is the trust deficit.

Political parties, primarily those aligned with the LDF and the Congress-led Opposition United Democratic Front (UDF), view the ECI and the SIR as convenient tools employed by the BJP and the RSS to further their larger political and ideological agenda. The hardship Kerala has had to undergo to secure extensions in its SIR schedule – the Supreme Court had to be petitioned at one point – has only served to strengthen such notions.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to remember that in the past, cumbersome nationwide exercises such as voter enrolment, the conduct of elections and the decennial Census have enjoyed the public perception of impartiality and bureaucratic efficiency. To say that public trust in the SIR hinges on guaranteeing the inclusion of all eligible voters in the roll in a trouble-free, citizen-friendly atmosphere would not be overstating it.

India loses 0.4% of its GDP every year to natural disasters

As the scale of economic loss escalates, disaster risk finance has moved to the forefront of policy

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

Emerging Asian economies that comprise India, China, and the ASEAN-11, face an escalating threat from natural disasters that are growing in both frequency and intensity (**Chart 1**). Over the past decade, the region has had an average of 100 disasters annually, impacting approximately 80 million people. The nature of these threats varies by geography: while floods and storms are the primary drivers of risk in India, tropical cyclones frequently batter the Philippines and Vietnam. Meanwhile, China and Indonesia contend with significantly higher seismic risks (**Chart 2**). The human and economic toll of this vulnerability has been punctuated by several landmark catastrophes.

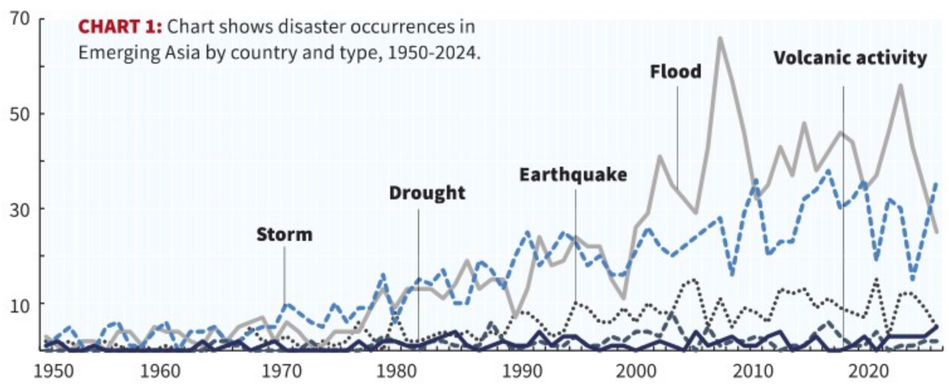
As the scale of economic loss escalates (**Chart 3**), disaster risk finance has moved to the forefront of regional policy. To design an effective response, governments must first establish a data-driven foundation. From 1990 to 2024, India sustained average annual disaster-related losses equivalent to 0.4% of GDP (**Chart 4**). The composition of these losses is geographically distinct. India's vulnerability is primarily hydrological (non-storm-related floods and landslides), whereas Myanmar's losses are predominantly meteorological (extreme temperatures and cyclonic storms).

The regional risk framework also includes climatological factors (drought and wildfire), and geophysical hazards (seismic activity and volcanic eruptions) too. Among the Asian economies analysed, India ranks second only to the Philippines in the World Risk Index (**Chart 5**). The index calculates risk as the geometric mean of exposure (population burden) and vulnerability (a combination of structural susceptibility, coping capacity, and long-term adaptation).

Asia's climate bill is rising

The charts were sourced from the OECD development centre's "Economic Outlook for Southeast Asia, China and India 2025: Enhancing Disaster Risk Financing" report released in December 2025

CHART 1: Chart shows disaster occurrences in Emerging Asia by country and type, 1950-2024.



Counting losses: A convenience shop owner assesses the damage after floods in southern Thailand in November 2025. AP

CHART 2: Chart shows the total occurrences of disasters in Emerging Asia by country and type, 2000-24

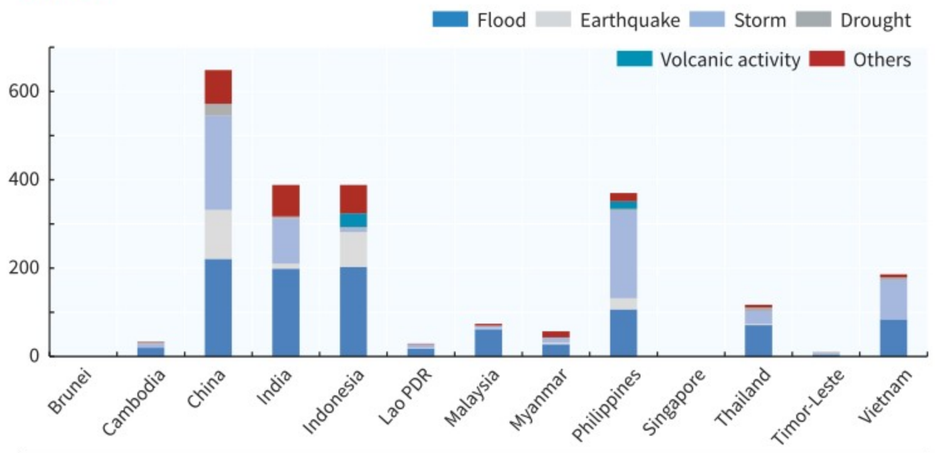


CHART 3: Total disaster-related damage among Emerging Asian countries (1980-2024). The data are depicted in $ billon

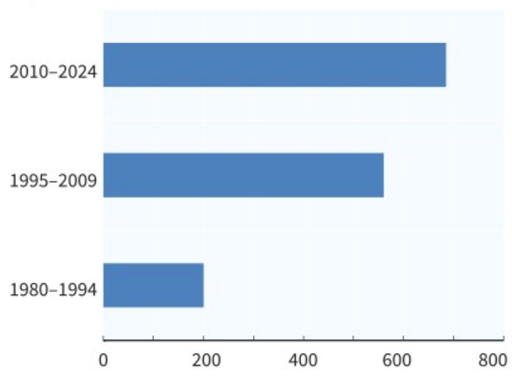


CHART 4: Average annual loss due to disasters, 1990-2024. The data are depicted as the percentage of a country's GDP

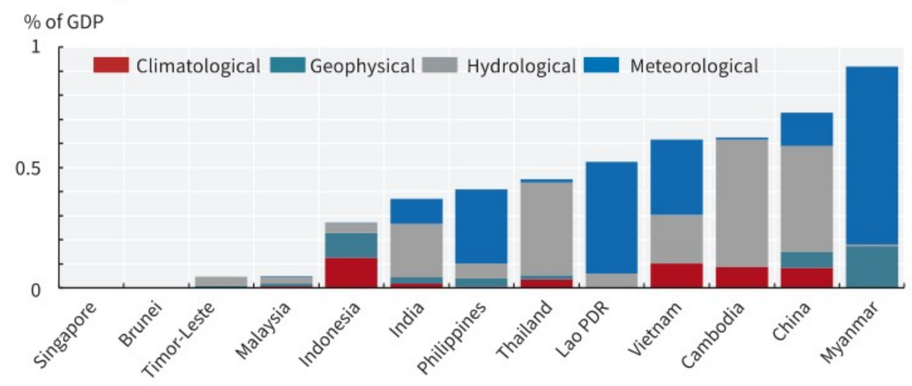
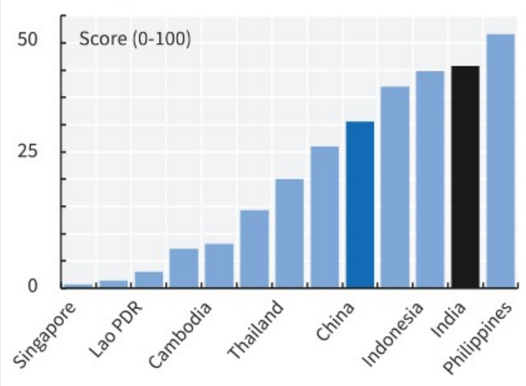


CHART 5: World Risk Index, by country, 2025. The higher the score, the higher the risk



FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 5, 1976

Foreign specialists to study SITE

United Nations, Jan. 4: A team of specialists in space technology and high-level mass media officials from 14 developing countries will visit India this month for an in-depth study of the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) launched by India to accelerate national development through community television programmes.

The Indian experiment, started in August last, has created widespread interest among the developing countries facing similar communications problems in carrying knowledge and information on agriculture, animal husbandry, family planning and other developmental concerns to the rural millions.

The countries that will be represented in the visiting team are: Bolivia, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kenya; Kuwait, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sudan, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey.

In line with its policy of sharing the benefits of its technological advance and systems planning, India recently offered to the United Nations to host representatives from interested developing countries to a "Winter School" to explain how India planned and implemented the SITE as a means of breaking the barrier hindering the advancement of the rural masses.

The U.N. accepted the offer and decided to include the Indian "Winter School" programme in the U.N. programme on Space Applications for 1976. The UNESCO is also being associated with the programme.

The team will be accompanied by the U.N. expert on space applications, Mr. H.G.S. Murthy.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 5, 1926

Protection for the ship-building trade

Calcutta, Jan. 4: Messrs. J.H. Bates and W.B. Balfour, on behalf of Messrs. Burn and Company, gave evidence before the Tariff Board to-day. They stated that the need for protective duties on imported vessels and their component parts was at present greater than in the year 1923. That was because of the imposition of a protective duty on steel and galvanised sheet, the rise in the exchange affecting home fabrication costs and the fall in the price of steel.

From Page One

Maduro held in U.S. jail; his V-P to take charge

Ms. Rodríguez had said that her country would defend its natural resources after Saturday's events.

"If she does not do what is right, she is going to pay a very big price, probably bigger than Mr. Maduro," Mr. Trump was quoted as saying in a telephone interview.

Trump's Greenland push

He also said other countries may be subject to American intervention. "We do need Greenland, absolutely," Mr. Trump said of the island that is part of Denmark, a NATO country.

The Venezuela court's ruling on Sunday added that the court will debate the matter in order to "determine the applicable legal framework to guarantee the continuity of the state, the administration of government, and the defence of sovereignty in the face of the forced absence of the President of the Republic."

Some Venezuelan civilians and members of the military were killed, said Ms. Rodríguez, who didn't give a number.

Speaking to reporters hours after Mr. Maduro's capture on Saturday, Mr. Trump had revealed his plans to exploit the leadership void to "fix" the country's oil infrastructure and sell "large amounts" of oil to other countries.

After arriving at a small airport in New York City's northern suburbs, Mr. Maduro was flown by helicopter to Manhattan, where a convoy of law enforcement vehicles, including an armoured car, was waiting to whisk him to a nearby U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration office.

A video posted on social media by a White House account showed Mr. Maduro, smiling, as he was escorted through that office by two DEA agents grasping his arms.

Venezuela's ruling party has held power since 1999, when Mr. Maduro's predecessor, Hugo Chávez, took office, promising to uplift poor people and later to implement a self-described socialist revolution.

Bangladesh not to travel to India for T20 WC

The Hindu understands that the decision not to travel to India was taken following an advice from the Bangladesh Sports Ministry.

"In light of this decision, the BCB has formally requested the International Cricket Council (ICC), as the event authority, to consider relocating all of Bangladesh's matches to a venue outside India. The Board believes that such a step is necessary to safeguard the safety and well-being of Bangladeshi players, team officials, Board members and other stakeholders, and to ensure that the team can participate in the tournament in a secure and appropriate environment."

The Men's T20 World Cup is scheduled from February 7 to March 8. Of the 55 matches in the tournament, Sri Lanka is slated to host 20, including all of Pakistan's fixtures, with the ICC having already agreed to neutral venues for India-Pakistan matches in ICC events until 2028.

Bangladesh is currently scheduled to play three league-stage matches in Kolkata, followed by its final league fixture in Mumbai.

While the BCCI, as the principal host, has a limited role in such decisions, a BCCI insider indicated that a change in fixtures was unlikely given that the tournament is "barely a month away". However, should the ICC intervene, the BCCI would be obliged to comply.

Russian oil imports at six-month high in Nov.

The U.S., in August 2025, hiked tariffs on India's imports from 25% to 50% as a "penalty" for its imports of Russian oil. This is despite the fact that, in seven of the eight months leading up to August, India had cut its Russian oil imports on a year-on-year basis.

According to sources in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, there is growing frustration in the government over the fact that, despite India's willingness to cut Russian oil imports, there has been little progress on addressing the tariff issue.

"India has already presented its final offer to the U.S. and the negotiators have done what they can," the official said on the condition of anonymity given the sensitivity of the issue. "The matter is now pending before their [the U.S.] leadership and nothing seems to be moving there."

Balancing U.S. interests

However, despite these apparent frustrations, India has continued to tread a fine line to balance U.S. interests.

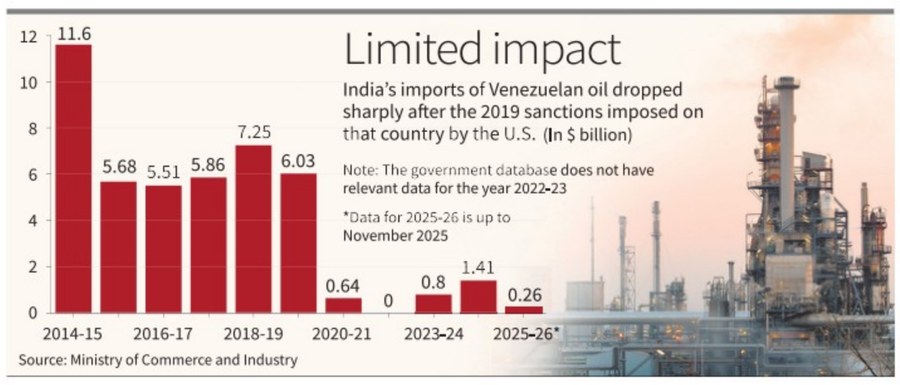
Last November, India's oil imports from the U.S. jumped to a seven-month high of nearly 2.8 million tonnes, with a total value of $1.4 billion. As a result, the U.S. saw its share in Indian oil imports jump to 12.6% that month, from 4.2% and 5.1% a month and a year earlier, respectively.

"If the U.S. is serious about the [India-U.S.] partnership, it should first cut the punitive tariff on Indian exports from 50% to 25%, especially since the Russian oil issue – the stated trigger – has already been resolved," Ajay Srivastava, founder of the Global Trade Research Initiative and former Director General of Foreign Trade for the Indian government, said.

Venezuela crisis unlikely to hit India's energy security

Venezuelan crude accounted for about 0.3% of India's total oil import in the current financial year up to November; since 2019, India has been cutting its imports from Venezuela after U.S. sanctions

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI



The United States attack on Venezuela is unlikely to have any direct impact on India's energy security, an analysis of the latest data shows.

Numbers from the Commerce and Industry Ministry show that India imported $255.3 million worth of oil from Venezuela in the current financial year up to November 2025, about 0.3% of its total oil import during this period.

In 2013, India had imported as much as $13 billion worth of Venezuelan oil. Since 2019, India has been cutting its oil imports and commercial engagements with Venezuela in response to U.S. sanctions and threats of secondary sanctions.

"Given the low trade volumes, existing sanctions constraints, and the large geographical distance, the current developments in Venezuela are not expected to have any meaningful impact on India's economy or energy security," Ajay Srivastava, founder of the Global Trade Research Initiative and former Director-General of Foreign Trade for the Indian government, said.

OPEC member

Venezuela is a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), a group of countries that largely dominates the global oil market. However, Venezuela currently produces a relatively small amount of crude oil compared with the other oil-producing nations.

According to OPEC data, Venezuela accounts for about 3.5% of the OPEC's total oil exports, and about 1% of global oil supplies.

Heavy oil

This relatively low supply is due to the U.S. sanctions on Venezuela and the heavy nature of Venezuelan oil, which requires special refineries that most countries do not have. Most of Venezuela's oil supply goes to China.

Following the U.S. actions in Venezuela over the weekend, Mr. Trump announced that the U.S. would take over Venezuela's oil supply. "We are going to rebuild the oil infrastructure, which will cost billions of dollars, it will be paid for by the oil companies directly," Mr. Trump said in his address following the attack.

India 'concerned' for well-being of people of Venezuela: MEA

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Ministry calls for talks to resolve issues, and for peace, stability in the region

A day after the United States military forcibly took away President Nicolas Maduro and his wife from Venezuela's capital Caracas, India has expressed its concern for the "well-being of the people of Venezuela", and called for dialogue to ensure peace and stability in the region.

The External Affairs Ministry had earlier issued a travel advisory for Indian citizens, calling upon them to stay safe as resource-rich Venezuela deals with the escalating situation.

"Recent developments in Venezuela are a matter of deep concern. We are closely monitoring the evolving situation. India reaffirms its support to the well-being and safety of the people of Venezuela. We call upon all concerned to address issues peacefully through dialogue, ensuring peace and stability of the region," the Ministry said in a statement.

The Embassy of India in Caracas, which witnessed U.S. military action on Saturday ahead of the extraction of President Maduro, "is in contact with members of the Indian community and will continue to provide all possible assistance", the Ministry said.

Earlier, the Ministry had advised Indian citizens in Venezuela to "exercise extreme caution, restrict their movements and remain in contact with the embassy through their email ID: cons.caracas@mea.gov.in. or the emergency phone number +58-412-9584288".

Venezuela shares India's position on reform of the international institutions, and has been supporting India's bid for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council for almost a decade.

Amid divided views, Modi govt. plays it safe on Maduro

NEWS ANALYSIS

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Voices of concern: Activists stage a protest against the U.S.'s attack on Venezuela at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Sunday. AFP

As world leaders divided themselves into two clear camps, either opposing or supporting the U.S. attacks on Caracas and its capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, the Indian government played a cautious line.

In its statement issued on Sunday, calling the evolving situation in the South American country a matter of "deep concern", the External Affairs Ministry did not refer to the United States or to the U.S. forces attacking the Venezuelan capital and taking Mr. Maduro captive, nor did it refer to UN principles.

Russia, China, Brazil, South Africa, and others in the Global South condemned the U.S. action as a violation of international law. On the other hand, the U.S.'s main allies in Europe, including Germany and France, supported the move, calling for a peaceful transition to a new "legitimate" leadership. Both China and Russia have also demanded that the U.S. release Mr. Maduro and, along with Colombia, have requested a meeting of the United Nations Security Council on Monday.

Expressing solidarity

In comparison, India's statement only called upon "all concerned" to resolve issues through dialogue, along with expressing solidarity with the Venezuelan people.

The government's response was also in contrast to India's response to a similar operation in 1989, when U.S. forces took Panamanian President Manuel Noriega captive and tried him in U.S. courts. In a speech in Parliament, then Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral had "deplored" the U.S. actions, invoking the UN charter and the principle of non-intervention.

Diplomatic experts said the Modi's government's response to the present situation was in line with recent Indian positions on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran, and Israel's bombardment of Gaza, where the government has decried the aggressions without naming the aggressors.

Juggling trade interests

"In situations where our statements don't make enough of a difference, the government's calculation would be to avoid very strong protests. In addition, we are at a crucial point in trade deal negotiations with the U.S., and need to tread cautiously," pointed out Deepak Bhojwani, who has served as India's Ambassador to seven South American countries including Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, and Cuba. He referred to the U.S. actions as a "*fait accompli*" to the world.

Another former Ambassador said that the External Affairs Ministry statement was not as strong as had been expected, especially on the clear violation of international law by the U.S., but added that this reflected India's considerably lower stakes in Venezuela.

In 2018, U.S. sanctions pressured India to stop oil trade with Venezuela, then one of its largest suppliers, and left two major Indian projects in developing oilfields in San Cristobal and Carabobo.

According to the Ministry's brief on bilateral relations, Mr. Maduro had requested a visit to India in August 2020, presumably an effort to resume the stalled projects. While that visit never materialised, Venezuela's Executive Vice-President and current Acting President Delcy Rodriguez, who had served with Mr. Maduro and former President Hugo Chavez, has made three official visits to India in the past decade, leading delegations to Delhi in 2016, 2019, and 2023.

Future of sanctions

The experts said that it was necessary to wait and see what situation emerges in Venezuela, given that the U.S. has removed Mr. Maduro, but not the military-backed establishment in the country. Nor has there been a move to install the Opposition leader and latest Nobel Laureate Maria Corina Machado or former diplomat Edmundo González Urrutia, who lives in exile in Spain and had been recognised by the U.S. and European countries as the winner of the 2024 elections. It remains to be seen whether the Modi government will now reach out to any of the leaders, including Ms. Rodriguez, who will govern the country post-Maduro.

"New Delhi will watch carefully whether the U.S. will now withdraw sanctions on Venezuela which had forced Indian companies to give up profitable contracts there," Mr. Bhojwani added.

The government's worries would grow, however, if the Trump administration's unilateral strike against Venezuela is a precedent for U.S. interventions in other countries with unfriendly governments in the region, beginning with Colombia, that goes to polls in 2026, Nicaragua, and Cuba, and even Brazil, given tense Trump-Lula ties.

As chair of the BRICS summit in 2026, New Delhi will be under pressure to ensure a common perspective on these issues, even as it works on repairing its own ties with the U.S.

Red Fort blast accused used 'ghost' SIM cards to stay in touch with handlers in Pak.

Press Trust of India
SRINAGAR/NEW DELHI

Compromised SIM cards remained active on messaging platforms across the border

Investigations into the "white-collar" terror module linked to the blast near Delhi's Red Fort on November 10 last year which claimed 15 lives show that doctors used a sophisticated web of "ghost" SIM cards and encrypted apps to coordinate with Pakistani handlers, officials claimed on Sunday.

Dual-phone protocol

The officials said "ghost" SIM cards were being used by the arrested doctors as part of a tactical "dual-phone" protocol to evade security agencies.

Each accused, including Dr. Umar Un Nabi, who was killed while driving the explosives-laden vehicle, carried two to three mobile handsets, they said. The accused carried one "clean" phone registered in their own names for personal and professional use to avoid suspicion, and another was the "terror phone" used exclusively for WhatsApp and Telegram communication with their handlers in Pakistan.

The SIM cards for these secondary devices were issued in the names of unsuspecting civilians whose Aadhaar details were misused, the officials said.

The security agencies noted a disturbing trend where these compromised SIM cards remained active on messaging platforms across the border in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) or Pakistan. By exploiting features that allow messaging apps to run without a physical SIM in the device, the handlers were able to direct the module to learn IED (improvised explosive device) assembly via YouTube and plot "hinterland" attacks.

To plug these security gaps, the Centre had issued a directive on November 28 last year, mandating that app-based communication services must be continuously linked to an active, physical SIM card within the device.

NIA files chargesheet against two more in 2024 hotel firing case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The agency has so far filed chargesheets against nine accused in the case

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a chargesheet against two alleged main shooters linked to Arshdeep Singh, alias Arsh Dalla, of the banned Khalistan Terrorist Force (KTF) in connection with the firing at a hotel in Rajasthan's Neemrana last year.

The arrested accused, Puneet and Narinder Lalli, had opened fire at the Highway King Hotel to threaten its owners for extorting "protection" money. The agency has so far filed chargesheets against nine accused in the case.

"The attack at the hotel was carried out in September 2024 by the terrorist-gangster syndicate of KTF led by 'designated individual terrorist' Arshdeep Singh alias Arsh Dalla and the Bambiah gang. Gang members Dinesh Gandhi and Saurabh Kataria were responsible for the planning of the attack, which was executed by Puneet and Narinder, who had the protection of Dalla and Gandhi," the agency said on Sunday.

During the investigation, the NIA uncovered the alleged role of Puneet and Narinder, who used prohibited weapons in the attack. "It was further found that the duo had been receiving funds, shelter and weapons from the syndicate on a sustained basis in a bid to promote KTF's objectives," the agency added.

Rape convict Dera chief again granted 40-day parole

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, who is serving a 20-year jail term for raping two of his disciples, was again granted a 40-day parole, said sources on Sunday.

His latest parole comes months after he was granted a 40-day parole in August last year. He was also granted a 21-day furlough in April and a 30-day parole in January, ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls.

Singh was sentenced in 2017 for raping two of his disciples. The Dera chief and three others were also convicted in 2019 for the murder of a journalist more than 16 years ago.

Prior to his latest parole, Singh has come out of prison 14 times since being convicted.

Rectify glitches or halt SIR: Bengal CM in third letter to CEC

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Mamata Banerjee

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has fired a fresh letter to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar urging him to rectify glitches in the special intensive revision of electoral rolls or halt the exercise in the State.

"I strongly urge you to immediately address and rectify the glitches, address the flaws and make the necessary corrections, failing which this unplanned, arbitrary and adhoc exercise must be halted. If allowed to continue in its present form, it will result in irreparable damage, large-scale disenfranchisement of eligible voters, and a direct assault on the foundational principles of democratic governance," she wrote in the letter dated January 3.

This is the Chief Minister's third letter to Mr. Kumar since the start of the SIR. In the latest letter, Ms. Banerjee claimed that critical instructions were being issued almost on a daily basis, frequently through informal channels such as WhatsApp messages and text messages.

'No proper notification'

"No proper written notifications, circulation or statutory orders – mandatory for an exercise of such magnitude and constitutional significance – are being issued. Such informality and arbitrariness leave no scope for accuracy, transparency, or accountability," Ms. Banerjee wrote.

In the first two letters, the Chief Minister had dubbed the SIR "unplanned, chaotic and unconstitutional", and blamed the exercise for deaths of BLOs (Booth Level Officers) and ordinary electors.

In the latest one, she said electors were being summoned for hearings without being informed of the specific reasons for such hearings.

"Even elderly, infirm, and seriously ill citizens are not being spared. Many electors are being compelled to travel distances of 20-25 kilometres to attend hearings, which have inexplicably been centralised rather than decentralised. This has caused severe hardship to ordinary citizens," Ms. Banerjee wrote.

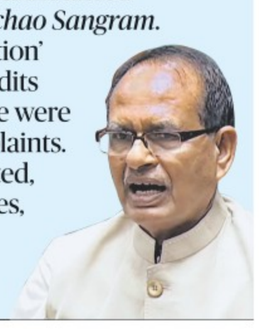
The Election Commission has sought an action taken report by 5 p.m. on Tuesday from West Bengal DGP Rajeev Kumar over harassment of Electoral Roll Observer C. Murugan. The vehicle of the IAS officer was attacked by local people in South 24 Parganas.

MGNREGA is synonymous with corruption: Chouhan

Union Minister accuses Congress of spreading misinformation about the new rural jobs Act, says it offers a better scheme than the MGNREGA; Centre unveils 184 'climate-resilient' seed varieties

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

> The Congress has announced an MGNREGA *Bachao Sangram*. It is actually a 'save corruption' campaign. Under social audits done by gram sabhas, there were more than 10,51,000 complaints. The same work was repeated, work was done by machines, money was siphoned off
>
> **SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN**
> Union Agriculture Minister



Defending the recently passed Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Sunday that the Congress was spreading misinformation about the new scheme. He also said that the new seed varieties, released on Sunday, would boost crop production.

Mr. Chouhan said Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi was not present in the House when the Bill was taken up for debate. He said the Opposition did not want to listen to the details of the Bill.

"The Congress has announced an MGNREGA [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act] *Bachao Sangram*. It is actually a 'save corruption' campaign. MGNREGA had become synonymous with corruption. Under social audits done by gram sabhas, there were more than 10,51,000 complaints. The same work was repeated, work was done by machines, money was siphoned off in the name of cleaning canals and roads, 30% workers were above the age of 60," he said.

The Minister said an amount of more than ₹8.48 lakh crore had been allocated to the scheme by the government, while the erstwhile United Progressive Alliance had spent just over ₹2 lakh crore on it. "The Congress is a factory of lies. It is now saying that workers will not get work," he said, adding that the new Bill offers a better scheme than the MGNREGA.

New seeds

The Centre on Sunday unveiled 184 high-yielding and climate-resilient seed varieties of 25 crops that will help farmers increase productivity, reduce costs, and cope with climate change, soil salinity, drought, and other biotic and abiotic stresses.

The new varieties – developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), various universities, and private entities – include 122 cereals, six pulses, 13 oilseeds, 11 fodder crops, six sugarcane varieties, 24 cotton (including 22 BT cotton), and one each of jute and tobacco, it said.

Mr. Chouhan said the country has become the world's largest rice producer, surpassing China.

"India's rice production has reached 150.18 million tonnes, compared with China's 145.28 million tonnes, ensuring national food security and strengthening India's role as a global food supplier," he said, adding that the new seed varieties will boost crop production and enhance income of farmers. Mr. Chouhan said that since 2014, the Narendra Modi government had approved 3,236 high-yielding varieties of seeds as against 3,969 notified between 1969 and 2014.

ICAR Director-General M.L. Jat highlighted the importance of breeding programmes focused on acidic soils, organic and natural farming systems, and regenerative agriculture.

Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi said the National Seeds Corporation played a major role in seed multiplication.

BJP ignored ideals of Lord Ram, Gandhi, says Surjewala

Press Trust of India
BHUBANESWAR

Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala criticised the Narendra Modi government for replacing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025 (VB-G RAM G).

Mr. Surjewala alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party neither respects Mahatma Gandhi nor Lord Ram, and uses them for "propaganda".

Addressing a press conference here on Saturday, Mr. Surjewala said that the replacement of the United Progressive Alliance-era MGNREGA with the VB-G RAM G Act had impacted the livelihood of about 50 crore poor, tribal, Dalit and backward class people.

"In the past 11 years, Mahatma Gandhi's spectacles have been borrowed for propaganda, but his ideals were ignored. In a similar manner, the BJP seized power in the name of Lord Ram, but ignored his ideals. This is the manner in which the BJP runs the government," he said.

Show of unity: Uddhav Thackeray and Raj Thackeray released their joint manifesto, *Vachan Nama*, for the BMC polls. PTI

Thackerays pledge free power, women's aid in joint manifesto

Purnima Sah
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray on Sunday released their joint manifesto, *Vachan Nama* (promissory note), for the upcoming Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections.

The two leaders accused the BJP-led *Mahayuti* of "stealing candidates" and eroding democratic norms ahead of the January 15 civic elections.

The manifesto was launched at Shiv Sena Bhavan, marking Mr. Raj Thackeray's first visit to the party headquarters in nearly two decades after his 2005 exit. Although the alliance includes the Nationalist Congress Party (SP), no senior leader from that party was present at the event.

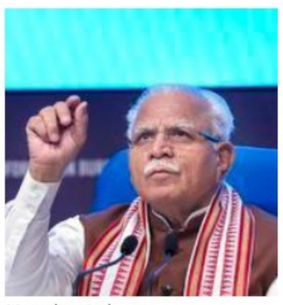
The document outlines sweeping promises across housing, transport, health, and education. It pledges affordable housing for Mumbaikars, stating that city land will be reserved for residents and announcing one lakh affordable homes in five years. Property tax will be waived on homes up to 700 sq. ft. Women voters were a key focus. The alliance promised Swabhiman Nidhi, a ₹1,500 monthly allowance for house helps and Koli women, similar to the State's Ladki Bahin Yojana.

The welfare measures include 100 units of free electricity. A meal scheme akin to Shiv Bhojan Thali will offer breakfast and lunch at ₹10. Financial aid ranging from ₹25,000 to ₹1 lakh for self-employment and an interest-free ₹25,000 loan for gig workers have also been promised. The alliance vowed to cut the minimum bus fare to ₹5 from ₹10.

Mr. Uddhav Thackeray used the occasion to launch a sharp attack on the ruling alliance and urged the State Election Commission to cancel elections in wards with unopposed wins. "You have stolen the right to vote from voters by electing candidates unopposed. Byelections should take place at these places," he said.

With Indus Treaty in abeyance, Minister calls for desilting of Salal reservoir

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR


Manohar Lal

Union Minister of Power and Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal on Sunday directed sediment removal at the Salal Power Project in Jammu and Kashmir to ensure maximum utilisation of water resources, in the wake of the Indus Waters Treaty being kept in abeyance between India and Pakistan.

He also toured power projects in Kishtwar amid an ongoing controversy.

While visiting the Salal Power Project, operated by the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation, Mr. Lal called for "expediting the sediment removal operations of the Salal reservoir".

The reservoir is located on the Chenab river in Reasi district. The direction follows the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty last year. Officials said the removal of accumulated silt was aimed at "maximising optimal utilisation of water resources".

Mr. Lal said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had delivered a clear message to Pakistan by keeping the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance last year. "Water of Chenab and Indus will be used for benefit of our own people," he said.

He also said no person with an unlawful background would be engaged in the ongoing hydel power projects in Kishtwar. "Employment will be provided only to verified and law-abiding workers. Good people should get work. Those with unlawful backgrounds will not be engaged. No adverse inputs have been received so far," he added.

CITU calls upon workers to make Feb. 12 strike against Labour Codes a big success

Hareesh P
VISAKHAPATNAM

Kommu Koya Tribals performing at the rally taken out on the last day of the All India CITU Conference in Visakhapatnam. V. RAJU

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) has given a call to the working class to make the February 12 general strike against what it has termed the draconian Labour Codes and the multi-pronged attack by the Union government on the people's rights and entitlements, a big success.

The five-day 18th CITU All India Conference came to an end on Sunday, with thousands of workers and leaders of the union taking part in an rally here, which culminated in a public meeting.

Addressing the gathering, CITU national president Sudeep Dutta said the working class struggle will advance from this day. Workers in every sector, right from agriculture to factories, are the people who are running society, the nation, and producing the wealth of the country, he said.

"The ruling class has brought the four Labour Codes to exploit workers and take away what we achieved with 100 years of struggle," he said. "They have taken away the right to 100 days' work in rural areas. They want to suppress the working class. We will fight with all our might. We won't allow them to take an inch of our rights," Mr. Dutta added.

"We will come on to the streets in thousands. Workers from different sectors of all States and languages will join us. We will block roads and railways. We will stop production. We will make the government understand the power of working class," he said.

Got threats for remarks on Bangladeshi pacer: Dubey

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) spokesperson Anand Dubey on Sunday alleged that he had received death threats after publicly opposing the inclusion of Bangladeshi pacer Mustafizur Rahman in the Kolkata Knight Riders squad for the 2026 Indian Premier League season.

Mr. Dubey said the calls came from Bangladesh-based numbers, after he had reiterated his party's stand that Bangladeshi cricketers should not be allowed to play in India amid political and human rights concerns in the neighbouring country.

The leader said he approached the Samta Nagar police station, where a non-cognisable complaint was registered, and the police assured him of security and began investigating the matter.

INBRIEF

Army Chief General Dwivedi embarks on two-day UAE visit

Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Sunday left for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on a two-day visit to explore ways to strengthen bilateral military cooperation. General Dwivedi is scheduled to hold talks with top military brass of the influential Gulf nation. "The visit underscores a shared commitment to deepening mutual understanding, enhancing cooperation in areas of common interest and advancing bilateral defence cooperation between the two nations," the Indian Army said on social media. His trip comes weeks after the Gulf nation's Commander of the Presidential Guard, Major General Ali Saif Humaid Alkaabi, visited India. PTI

Rajnath Singh to commission new Coast Guard ship today

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will commission Indian Coast Guard ship *Samudra Pratap*, the first of two pollution control vessels, in Goa on Monday. The vessel is equipped with advanced systems to detect oil spills, enabling comprehensive pollution response operations within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and beyond. "It is capable of high precision operations, recover pollutants from viscous oil, analyse contaminants, and separate oil from contaminated water," the Indian Coast Guard said. The 114.5-metres long and 4,200-tonne vessel boasts a speed of more than 22 knots and an endurance of 6,000 nautical miles, enhancing the ICG's pollution response, fire-fighting and maritime security capabilities. PTI

CBDT chief seeks preparation for new Income Tax Act

Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman Ravi Agrawal has asked the Income Tax Department to be ready and proactive for the transition to the new direct tax law, which is scheduled to be implemented from April 1, calling upon officials to work with clarity and purpose. In his customary New Year communication to department staff, the CBDT chief said new rules, procedures and forms were being formulated to facilitate the transition. The CBDT is the administrative body for the Income Tax Department. The new Income Tax Act will replace the existing Income Tax Act of 1961, which has been in force for over six decades. PTI

Two killed in rock collapse at illegal stone quarry in Odisha

At least two persons were killed after rocks collapsed at an unauthorised stone quarry in Dhenkanal district of Odisha, officials said on Sunday. The incident took place on Saturday when some workers were engaged in drilling and exploration of stone from the quarry located near Gopalpur village in the district, they said. The exact cause behind the incident is not yet clear. Teams of local fire service, Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF), along with dog squad were engaged in rescue operations, an officer said. PTI

Remains of Indian killed in Ukraine war brought back

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

The mortal remains of a 28-year-old man from Punjab, who lost his life in the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war, have reached his home town Goraya, in Jalandhar, after a wait of over a year.

The man, Mandeep Kumar, was tricked by unscrupulous "travel agents" and later forced to join the Russian Army. He died in a drone attack while fighting against Ukraine, his elder brother Jagdeep Kumar claimed on Sunday.

Mr. Jagdeep Kumar, who recently returned from Russia after searching for his brother, said the latter's mortal remains had been brought back. They were received at the Delhi airport on Saturday.

"I came to know about the death of my brother two months back, after my DNA samples given to the Russian authorities matched with one of the bodies," he told *PTI*.

Mr. Jagdeep Kumar said Mandeep, along with four others, travelled to Armenia in September 2023. From there, they were supposed to go to Italy. He was promised he would be sent to Italy for work but the "travel agents" took him to Russia instead, and coerced him to join the Russian Army, he claimed.

Air Force chief calls for timely delivery of combat aircraft

IAF chief congratulates ADA on 25 years of LCA Tejas; DRDO Chairman highlights need for indigenous technology to reduce import dependence

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh, the Chief of the Air Staff, on Sunday emphasised the need to adhere to delivery timelines to keep the Indian Air Force operationally ready in the constantly evolving times.

Addressing a two-day seminar on "Aeronautics 2047", Air Chief Marshal Singh congratulated the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) for the completion of 25 years of flight by the light combat aircraft (LCA) Tejas.

The ADA designed and developed the Tejas, with more than 5,600 successful flight trials.

More than 100 design centres, including government laboratories, academic institutes, and industries, were associated with this programme. Several niche technologies, including carbon composites, light-weight materials, fly-by-wire flight control, digital utility management system, and a glass cockpit, were developed to make the LCA a fourth-generation fighter.

Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh addresses the gathering during a national seminar on 'Aeronautics 2047' in Bengaluru. PTI

Defence Research and Development Organisation Chairman Samir V. Kamat underscored the importance of developing indigenous cutting-edge technology to minimise India's dependence on imports, thereby realising the vision of a developed India by 2047.

Modern technologies

The seminar brought together domain experts, industrial partners, academia, aviation enthusiasts, and speakers from across the aerospace community to share their insights on the evolution of aeronautics, design innovation, manufacturing, and future frontiers.

The focus of "Aeronautics 2047" is to explore modern aerospace technologies, including manufacturing and assembly for next generation aircraft, digital manufacturing, aerodynamics for next generation combat aircraft, propulsion technologies, and flight testing techniques.

It also covers certification challenges, flight control systems, avionics, maintainability challenges in fighter aircraft, artificial intelligence in aircraft design, and precision manufacturing for actuators.

J&K administration takes measures to curb drug trafficking

The Hindu Bureau
JAMMU

The Jammu & Kashmir administration on Sunday issued stringent directives to couriers and parcel services in a bid to curb drug trafficking in Jammu.

"No courier company, parcel service, or logistics operator functioning within the district Jammu shall accept, book or transport any narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, or other contraband items unless it holds a valid transport permit under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Rules 1985 and as per regulations under Drugs and Cosmetic Act 1940," Rakesh Minhas, District Magistrate, Jammu, said in an order.

The order was issued under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita-2023 and provisions of the NDPS Act, 1985.

It directed all the employees, engaged in courier, parcel services, delivery staff, loaders, booking clerks, franchise workers, "to be duly verified through local police verification. The order asked the companies to maintain an updated register of such verified employees".

The order directs all employees engaged in courier services to be verified through local police.

"They shall impart training and sensitisation to employees for identifying suspicious consignments and reporting them to the nearest police authority," the order said.

The order warned of legal action if any courier company or agency was found violating this order. "Owners, MDs, directors, agents, and all employees involved may be prosecuted under relevant Sections of the NDPS Act, BNSS and other applicable laws. Penalties may include seizure of consignments, cancellation of license, fines and criminal sanctions," the order read.

The District Magistrate also directed the Senior Superintendent of Police , Jammu, to ensure "strict enforcement of this order and to conduct inspections and initiate necessary legal action against defaulters".

Centre relaxes norms for start-ups to get funds from DSIR

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Sunday relaxed the norms for deep-tech start-ups to get financial assistance from the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

At the 42nd foundation day celebrations of the DSIR, Union Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh announced the removal of the three-year viability criteria for deep-tech start-ups to get financial assistance of up to ₹1 crore under the Industrial Research and Development Promotion Programme of the department.

The DSIR extends financial assistance up to ₹1 crore to start-ups under its IRDPP only if they prove to be sustainable and viable for a minimum period of three years.

Jitendra Singh

Describing the move as an incentive to accelerate and sustain start-ups, Mr. Singh said, "The removal of the three-year existence requirement is a significant incentive to help deep-tech start-ups scale faster, even before they are fully on their own." However, the start-ups will have to maintain appropriate evaluation standards linked to technological maturity, he said.

The Hindu Sustainability Dialogues to be held tomorrow; focus on environmental issues

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Hindu Sustainability Dialogues, in partnership with Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences (SIMATS), will bring together leading academics, subject matter experts, policymakers, and industry stakeholders for a dialogue on sustainability on Tuesday.

The event, to be held at Saveetha Medical College, Thandalam, Chennai, will centre on practical and forward-looking solutions to address India's growing environmental challenges.

The initiative will be inaugurated by Soumya Swaminathan, Chairperson of M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, in the presence of N. M. Veeraiyan, founder and Chancellor of SIMATS, Chennai, and other distinguished guests. Dr. Swaminathan will deliver the keynote address.

Designed as a platform for knowledge exchange and actionable insights, the programme features three thematic sessions covering critical areas of sustainability. The opening panel, "Future of Waste Management: Innovation, Technology and Behaviour Change", will examine how integrated strategies combining policy, technology and citizen participation can help transform waste management systems in our cities.

This will be followed by a session on "Recycling, Recharging, Restoring - The New Imperatives for Water Management", which will focus on sustainable water governance, infrastructure resilience and technological interventions. The event will conclude with a fireside chat with Ashwani Kumar, Vice-Chancellor, SIMATS, Chennai, on "Sustainable Campuses - How Institutions Can Lead India's Green Transition".

To register: https://newsth.live/SSDLPA / or scan the QR code.

Gandhinagar typhoid surge due to water pipeline leak

Press Trust of India
AHMEDABAD

Union Home Minister and Gandhinagar Lok Sabha member Amit Shah on Sunday directed the city's administration to work on a war footing amid the emergence of nearly 100 cases of suspected typhoid, the Gujarat government said.

Due to leakage in a water pipeline, cases of suspected typhoid were reported in Sectors 24, 28, and Adivada area of Gandhinagar city a few days ago, the State government said in a release.

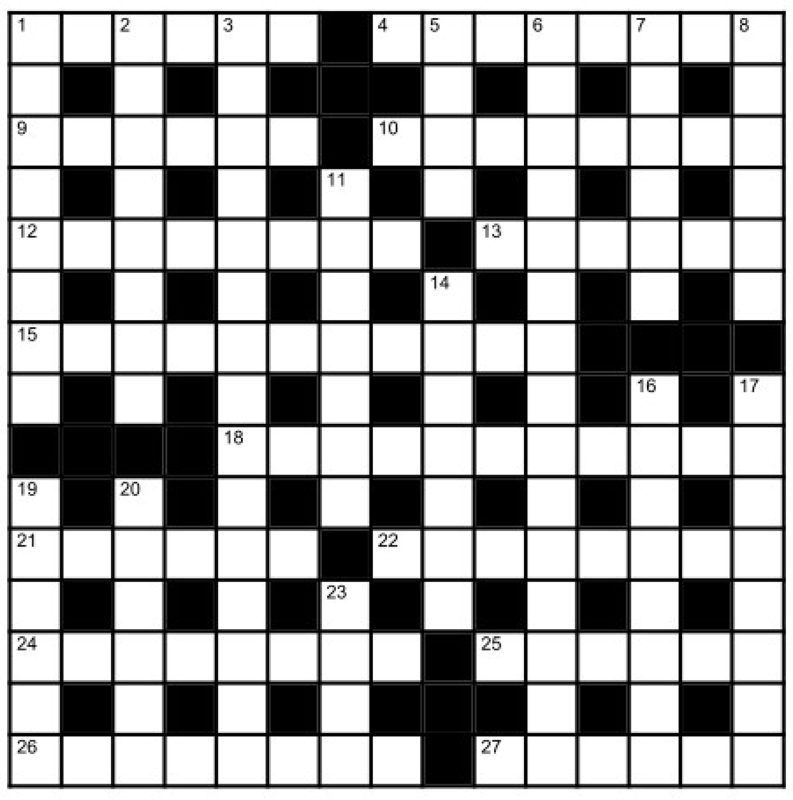
So far, 113 cases of suspected typhoid have been detected in the State capital. Of these, 19 patients have been discharged after treatment, while 94 are under treatment.

TH CROSSWORD+ 14683

(set by Karaoke)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://crossword.thehindu.com*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Donkeys swept away crossing river (6)
4 Spending billions carelessly, bargained for plant (8)
9 Unhappier cycling in summers (6)
10 Building blast suppresses antiaircraft gun-shot (8)
12 Tough nut of knapweed plant (8)
13 The ultimate goal to stop ball with headshot! (3-3)
15 Family members vigorously resist proceedings outside (11)
18 Let her drown at sea or other place (11)
21 Slip away from police case with police clothes (6)
22 Pack animal's centre of energy (8)
24 Spot what the striking employees do? (4,4)
25 The Island rejected appeal by Indian bowler (6)
26 They are legally empowered perhaps to earn supplementary income initially (8)
27 Restores sugar substance on review, after withdrawing support (6)

Down

1 Examine critically about long drink container (3,5)
2 Advocates and merchants give volume discount on fees occasionally (8)
3 Procure washing powder first in a heap, it's value for money (10,5)
5 Maybe lords and ladies take alcohol first, strange! (4)
6 Foolishly going down with ease regularly at party, It brings downfall (3,4,3,5)
7 Treating ailing antelope (6)
8 Wife breaks a cash box when she chooses (2,4)
11 Some Incas sat around frozen food (7)
14 Without doubt, double agents destroyed African Republic (7)
16 Cunning model enters busy fair to murder (8)
17 Addison treated with drug for speech hindering tissue (8)
19 Mature or amateur in extremely sensitive issue (6)
20 Cat to perform in a play? (3,3)
23 Take flight, left to right, for nothing (4)

SUDOKU

7	4				6	2		
6		2	4				5	
							1	
	7			5	3			2
4				2				5
2			7	1			9	
	6							
	3				5	7		9
		7	9				3	6

No.SS6752 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

C	H	A	M	P	■	P	R	O	S	T	A	T	E	S
I	■	L	■	A	■	A	■	S	■	R	■	A	■	I
G	R	A	I	N	E	R	■	C	R	I	C	K	E	T
A	■	R	■	A	■	T	■	A	■	F	■	E	■	E
R	E	M	E	M	B	R	A	N	C	E	D	A	Y	■
I	■	E	■	A	■	I	■	■	■	C	■	I	■	■
L	A	D	Y	■	■	D	O	W	N	T	I	M	E	S
L	■	■	■	A	■	G	■	A	■	A	■	■	■	N
O	P	I	U	M	D	E	N	S	■	■	Z	I	T	I
■	■	R	■	I	■	■	■	T	■	H	■	N	■	D
■	C	O	N	C	R	E	T	E	J	U	N	G	L	E
A	■	N	■	A	■	V	■	A	■	X	■	R	■	N
G	O	O	D	B	Y	E	■	W	E	L	C	O	M	E
R	■	U	■	L	■	N	■	A	■	E	■	W	■	S
A	R	T	L	E	S	S	L	Y	■	Y	A	N	K	S

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

1	7	8	2	3	4	9	6	5
9	6	5	7	1	8	2	4	3
3	2	4	6	9	5	7	8	1
4	1	9	3	7	6	5	2	8
5	3	2	4	8	9	1	7	6
6	8	7	1	5	2	4	3	9
2	4	3	5	6	1	8	9	7
8	5	6	9	2	7	3	1	4
7	9	1	8	4	3	6	5	2

FAITH

Unnerved by oppression

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of Sikhs, was born in a historical period when North India was reeling under the tyranny and oppression of the Mughal rule. Guru Gobind Singh was only nine when his father, the ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur Singh, was martyred by Aurangazeb for refusing to convert to Islam. Thus, Guru Gobind Singh shouldered a heavy responsibility on his young shoulders from his childhood, and showed mankind a path to divinity based on compassion and true love, said Prof. Kumool Abbi.

In the year 1699, Guru Gobind Singh formed the institution of the Khalsa. The order of the Khalsa was egalitarian. Guru Gobind Singh's pluralistic philosophy encompassed acceptance of diverse religious identities, advocating religious harmony.

He fought 14 wars against his oppressors and tyrants, but with ethical and moral principles: never taking captives or damaging places of worship. He was also never the first to be the aggressor, his goal being ensuring religious freedom. He believed as stated in *Zafarnama*: only when all avenues fail, it is then righteous to pick up the sword.

Guru Gobind Singh faced with fortitude the execution of his two sons, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, even while he had lost his other two sons at the battle of Chamkaur Sahib. The Mughals attacked Macchiwara, where he faced an army of a lakh, with his 40 soldiers.

He penned the famous hymn, *Mitr pyare nu haal muridan da kehna*, (oh beloved friend of the Lord, see the plight of your disciples). He is credited with finalising the manuscript of Guru Granth Sahib and declaring it to be the ultimate Guru for Sikhs.

Personal loans: how banks assess self employed

Santosh Agarwal

Self-employed applicants are assessed more strictly for personal loans than salaried applicants, due to the uncertainty of income involved. Staying aware of the lender's requirements can help self-employed individuals prepare better for a smoother approval.

Let's take a look at key factors lenders analyse while approving a personal loan for self-employed applicants.

Credit health, repayment history
Credit health remains a key metric of assessment for loans.

It shows how reliable an applicant is as a borrower. A high credit score demonstrates disciplined and timely repayment of past credit obligations. For self-employed applicants, a strong credit profile is key, which can lead to both easy approvals and better interest rates.

Few lenders are starting to move beyond the traditional metrics and experimenting with alternative data signals to cater to the credit needs of new-to-credit and thin-file borrowers. Data around banking transactions, payment patterns and digital footprints are also being used by some new-age lenders for underwriting.

Income consistency, cash flow
One significant area lenders focus on is the income consistency of

Keen eye: Self-employed are assessed more strictly for personal loans. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

self-employed applicants.

Lenders want to assess how comfortably self-employed applicants can service the loan. To establish this, lenders typically review income and cash flow trends across the last few financial years.

Strong and predictable cash flows, supported by bank statements, signal lower repayment risk. Irregular deposits or sharp income dips increase the lender's risk, leading to rejection or higher interest rates.

Debt-to-income ratio
Another key factor that lenders take into account is the existing debt obligations of the applicant as compared to their income.

Existing EMIs, business loans, or credit card dues reduce disposable income and affect the repayment capacity of the applicant.

Usually, lenders prefer applicants with a debt-to-income ratio of up to 50-55%, including the EMI of the new personal loan. In certain cases, for instance, in the cases of high-income individuals, lenders may allow a higher FOIR.

Additional requirements
Beyond income and credit parameters, lenders also evaluate factors such as business vintage, type of business, overall financials, including Income Tax Returns, audited financials (where applicable), and banking behaviour such as average balances, cheque bounces, and account regularity.

Also, the applicant's age, industry risk, and future earning potential influence loan tenure and eligibility, helping lenders arrive at a more holistic assessment of the self-employed borrower's repayment capability.

(The writer is CEO of Paisabazaar)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.

SAINATH B.

Uses of systematic investment, transfer plans

Both these are methods of investment and not an investment product per se; understanding the nuances of the two concepts would help you to deploy them to your benefit

INVEST OR TRANSFER?

Joydeep Sen

We are all familiar with Systematic Investment Plans (SIP) and to an extent, Systematic Transfer Plan (STP). The goal is similar: when you invest in a disciplined manner over a long period of time, the average cost of acquisition works in your favour as you purchase across market cycles. There are certain differences as well, between SIP and STP.

> SIP is a mandate given to the MF where a sum of money flows from your bank to the MF at a defined frequency for investment in designated funds

> STP is a cost-averaging solution; you prefer to average out investments; you park the money in a defensive fund viz. a liquid fund or an ultra short-term fund

SIP, STP
SIP is a mandate given by you to the Mutual Fund (MF) where a certain sum of money flows from your bank to the MF at a defined frequency, usually monthly, for investment in the designated funds. In a STP, you invest lump sum in a fund, usually a liquid fund and mandate the transfer at a defined frequency, usually monthly, into designated funds of the same MF. It is used to systematically transfer from the source fund, say liquid fund, usually to equity-oriented funds. The purpose is averaging out the cost of acquisition across market cycles. The reason for using liquid or ultra short term fund as the source fund for STP is these funds are stable in performance. Both SIP and STP are flexible i.e. you can start or pause or stop at any point if you so desire.

Though the purpose of SIP and STP is the same, there is a subtle difference. SIP is a cash-flow solution. You will earn the money gradually over a period of time via monthly salary or income from business or profession. Part of the income will be invested. SIP acts as a discipline; before it is spent, it is channelised into investments in MFs. Cost averaging in a SIP is an added advantage.

STP is a cost-averaging solution. You have the money; rather than investing lump sum, you prefer to average out investments. If you keep the money in savings account, the 'propensity to spend' comes into play. Hence you park the money in a defensive fund viz. liquid or ultra short term fund. Usually monthly, the defined amount flows from the source fund to the designated funds to give you the advantage of rupee cost averaging.

Wealth creation
SIP's purpose is long-term wealth creation. STP's purpose is strategic deployment of lump sum to average out. In STP, the amount in the source fund, continues to earn. If you have deployed in a liquid or ultra short-term fund, usually the accrual level is more than that of bank savings account, comparable to bank fixed deposits. In STP, in case there is a significant correction in the equity market you can take a call on timing the market and transfer the balance amount one-shot from liquid to designated funds.

Taxation
In the growth option of MFs, you pay tax when you redeem i.e. you don't have to pay tax every year. In a SIP, there are multiple dates of investment. The basis of taxation is called First-In-First-Out (FIFO) i.e. the initial date of investment in the fund is considered first, then the second investment and so on, matched with the redemption price to compute capital gains. In a STP, you are redeeming from source fund and have to pay tax on capital gains till that point of time. When you redeem from the designated funds after a long period of time, it is FIFO.

Other use of STP
The other dimension is derisking or rebalancing portfolio. You would have a certain portfolio allocation e.g. 60% to equity. Let us say allocation to equity is higher than planned and you do not wish to withdraw from the equity market. In such a situation, you may start profit booking at the margin. It is here STP comes in handy. From the equity funds, you designate a certain sum to be transferred to, say, a liquid fund. The benefit is profit booking and rebalancing is averaged out rather than timing the market. Since no one knows the market peak, you average it out via STP. At the end of the STP, your allocation comes back to the intended level.

Suitability
SIP is suited more for salaried individuals or those with regular earnings. STP is for those who earn in irregular chunks so that the acquisition cost is averaged out. For salaried individuals, STP is useful when you receive a chunk e.g. bonus or windfall. The other dimension of STP is anyone may need gradual rebalancing of portfolio.

Conclusion
Both of these are methods of investment (or withdrawal as in the case of other use of STP) and not an investment product per se. The usage depends on your objectives and financial situation e.g. available funds. You can combine the two i.e. SIP for regular income and STP for lump sum deployments.

(The writer is is a corporate trainer (financial markets) and author)

Gold, silver prices may cool off

PRECIOUSMETALS

B. Krishnakumar

Precious metals ended 2025 on a strong note with gold and silver reaching fresh life-time highs in the last week of December. Prices cooled off a bit in the last couple of trading sessions of 2025 but gold and silver posted handsome gains for the year. The interest rate cuts announced by the U.S. Federal Reserve along with the weakening of the U.S. Dollar and uncertainty surrounding U.S. tariffs were the key catalysts for the spike in gold prices in 2025.

Comex gold surged past the psychological $4,500-mark last month but closed a tad lower at $4,332.1 by end December. This represents a gain of 1.78%. The price action in Comex silver was more impressive with the white metal notching up a 24.34% gain last month to settle at a fresh lifetime high of $70.98.

Mirroring global market trend, MCX Gold price gained 4.5% to settle at ₹1,35,580 per 10-gm. MCX silver recorded a whopping 34.55% gain last month to settle at ₹2,35,920/kg.

As observed last month, Comex gold resumed uptrend and went way past the then-mentioned target zone of $4,450-$4,500. The recent spike in price resulted in an overbought scenario, warranting a mean reversion move or a cool off. Comex gold price is likely to either remain range bound or drift lower to immediate support at $4,150-$4,200 zone. The long-term trend is positive and gold price could resume uptrend once the anticipated consolidation or pullback phase is over. Comex Silver price too behaved in sync with last month's expectations and the price breezed past the target zone of $60-$62 mentioned last month. Like gold, silver price too is likely to remain subdued, trying to digest the recent gains. A drift lower to the immediate support zone of $65-$67 appears likely, before the resumption of the long-term uptrend.

In the domestic market, the depreciation of the Indian Rupee versus the U.S. Dollar resulted in a slightly exaggerated gains compared with Comex price levels. MCX gold price moved to the target zone of ₹1,38,000-₹1,40,000 range.

The recent price action suggests gold price could cool off in the near term and a fall to ₹1,28,000-₹1,30,000 seems likely . MCX silver, too, achieved the target price of ₹1,82,000-₹1,83,000 mentioned last month. Silver price in the domestic market could ease to ₹2,17,000-₹2,19,000 zone in the near term. The long-term uptrend is expected to resume on completion of the expected cool off phase.

Conclusion
To summarise, both gold and silver are in an overbought zone, warranting a cool off in the near term.

The long-term trend however remains positive.

(The author is a Chennai based analyst/trader. The views and opinion featured in this column is based on the analysis of short-term price movement in gold and silver futures at COMEX & Multi Commodity Exchange of India. This is not meant to be a trading or investment advice.)

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

Bank Name	Interest Rates (%) Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure
Small Finance Banks				
AU Small Finance Bank	7.10	6.35	7.10	6.75
Equitas Small Finance Bank	7.30	7.00	7.00	7.00
ESAF Small Finance Bank	7.60	4.75	6.00	5.75
Jana Small Finance Bank	7.77	7.00	7.50	7.77
Shivalik Small Finance Bank	7.50	6.00	6.75	6.25
slice Small Finance Bank	7.75	6.25	7.50	7.00
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	8.00	7.25	7.25	8.00
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	7.45	7.25	7.20	7.20
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	7.50	6.00	7.50	7.00
Private Sector Banks				
Axis Bank	6.45	6.25	6.45	6.45
Bandhan Bank	7.20	7.00	7.00	5.85
City Union Bank	6.75	6.50	6.50	6.25
CSB Bank	7.00	5.00	5.75	5.75
DBS Bank	6.60	6.30	6.40	6.25
DCB Bank	7.15	6.90	7.00	7.00
Federal Bank	6.75	6.25	6.75	6.40
HDFC Bank	6.45	6.25	6.45	6.40
ICICI Bank	6.50	6.25	6.45	6.50
IDFC FIRST Bank	7.00	6.30	7.00	7.00
IndusInd Bank	7.00	6.75	6.90	6.65
Jammu & Kashmir Bank	7.00	6.50	6.65	6.60
Karur Vysya Bank	6.80	6.55	6.55	6.55
Karnataka Bank	6.65	6.50	6.15	6.15
Kotak Mahindra Bank	6.70	6.25	6.40	6.25
RBL Bank	7.20	7.00	7.20	6.70
SBM Bank India	7.10	7.00	7.10	7.00
South Indian Bank	6.60	6.60	6.20	5.70
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	6.90	6.80	6.60	6.60
YES Bank	7.00	6.65	7.00	6.75
Public Sector Banks				
Bank of Baroda	6.60	6.25	6.50	6.40
Bank of India	6.70	6.25	6.25	6.00
Bank of Maharashtra	6.55	6.20	5.25	5.00
Canara Bank	6.15	5.90	5.90	5.90
Central Bank of India	6.50	6.20	6.00	6.00
Indian Bank	6.45	6.10	6.05	6.00
Indian Overseas Bank	6.60	6.50	6.10	6.10
Punjab National Bank	6.40	6.10	6.30	6.10
Punjab & Sind Bank	6.60	5.85	5.85	5.95
State Bank of India	6.45	6.25	6.30	6.05
Union Bank of India	6.30	6.25	6.00	5.90

Home Loan Interest Rates

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.) Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh
			(In %)
Public Sector Banks			
State Bank of India	7.25-8.70	7.25-8.70	7.25-8.70
Bank of Baroda	7.20-9.00	7.20-9.00	7.20-9.25
Union Bank of India*	7.15-9.50	7.15-9.50	7.15-9.50
Punjab National Bank	7.25-9.10	7.20-9.00	7.20-9.00
Bank of India	7.10-10.00	7.10-10.00	7.10-10.25
Bank of Maharashtra	7.10-9.90	7.10-9.90	7.10-9.90
Punjab and Sind Bank	7.30-10.70	7.30-10.70	7.30-10.70
Indian Overseas Bank	7.10 #	7.10 #	7.10 #
Indian Bank	7.15-9.55	7.15-9.55	7.15-9.55
Central Bank of India	7.10-9.15	7.10-9.15	7.10-9.15
Private Sector Banks			
Kotak Mahindra Bank	7.70 #	7.70 #	7.70 #
ICICI Bank	7.65 #	7.65 #	7.65 #
Axis Bank	8.35-11.90	8.35-11.90	8.35-9.35
HSBC Bank	7.45 #	7.45 #	7.45 #
South Indian Bank	7.80 #	7.80 #	7.80 #
Karur Vysya Bank	8.50-10.65	8.50-10.65	8.50-10.65
Karnataka Bank	7.30-11.68	7.30-11.68	7.30-11.68
Federal Bank	8.75 #	8.75 #	8.75 #
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	7.90 - 9.30	7.90 - 9.30	7.90 - 9.30
Bandhan Bank	8.41-12.58	8.41-12.58	8.41-12.58
RBL Bank	8.20 #	8.20 #	8.20 #
CSB Bank	8.05 #	8.05 #	8.05 #
HDFC Bank	7.90 #	7.90 #	7.90 #
City Union Bank	8.25-9.50	8.50-10.00	8.75-10.50
Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)			
LIC Housing Finance	7.15 #	7.15 #	7.15 #
Bajaj Housing Finance	7.15 #	7.15 #	7.15 #
Tata Capital	7.75 #	7.75 #	7.75 #
PNB Housing Finance	7.90 #	7.90 #	7.90 #
GIC Housing Finance	8.20 #	8.20 #	8.20 #
SMFG India Home Finance	10.00 #	10.00 #	10.00 #
Sammaan Capital	8.75 #	8.75 #	8.75 #
Aditya Birla Capital	7.75 #	7.75 #	7.75 #
ICICI Home Finance	7.50 #	7.50 #	7.50 #
Godrej Housing Finance	7.75 #	7.75 #	7.75 #

*0.05% interest rate sop to borrowers opting for insurance
#Onwards Rates as on Jan.2 Source:Paisabazaar.com

DAMASCUS

Britain, France strike suspected Islamic State arms facility in Syria

AFP

Britain and France carried out a joint air strike in central Syria on an underground facility where members of the Islamic State group are suspected to have stored weapons and explosives. Britain's Ministry of Defence said guided bombs were used on Saturday evening to target a number of access tunnels north of Palmyra. AP

DHAKA

3 held in connection with death of Hindu businessman in Bangladesh

AFP

Three persons — identified as Damudyar Sohag Khan, 27, Rabbi Molya, 21, and Palash Sardar, 25 — were arrested on Sunday in the case of hacking and burning to death a Hindu businessman in Shariatpur district of Bangladesh. Khokon Chandra Das, 50, was assaulted near Keurbhanga Bazar in Shariatpur on Wednesday. PTI

CAIRO

Israeli forces kill three Palestinians in Gaza Strip, say local authorities

AFP

Israeli forces shot and killed at least three Palestinians in separate incidents in the southern Gaza Strip city of Khan Younis on Sunday, local health authorities said. Medics reported that the dead included a 15-year-old boy. Gaza's Health Ministry says 420 Palestinians have been killed since the ceasefire began. REUTERS

TEHRAN

Rights groups say at least 16 dead in Iran during week of protests

AFP

At least 16 people have been killed during a week of unrest in Iran, rights groups said on Sunday, as protests over soaring inflation spread across the country, sparking clashes between demonstrators and security forces. Iran has faced inflation above 36% and the rial has lost around half its value against the dollar. REUTERS

Democratic U.S. lawmakers say they were misled on Venezuela

Senator Chuck Schumer says they had been 'kept in the dark', demands full briefings for all lawmakers; Congress to vote next week on limiting further military action in South American nation; Trump defends move over 'security concerns'

Reuters
WASHINGTON

Democratic members of the U.S. Congress said on Saturday that senior officials of President Donald Trump's administration had misled them during recent briefings about plans for Venezuela by insisting they were not planning regime change in Caracas.

The U.S. attacked Venezuela and deposed its long-serving President Nicolas Maduro in an overnight operation, in Washington's most direct intervention in Latin America since the 1989 invasion of Panama.

Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democrats' leader in the Senate, said he had been told in three classified briefings that the administration was not pursuing regime change or planning to take military action in Venezuela.

Secret project: Members of Congress claim officials denied any plans for regime change or military action in Venezuela. AP

"They assured me that they were not pursuing those things," Mr. Schumer said on a call with pressperson. "Clearly they're not being straight with the American people."

Mr. Schumer said he had not been briefed by Saturday afternoon and called for the administration to fill in not just congressional and intelligence committee leaders, but also all lawmakers by early next week.

"They've kept everyone in the total dark," he said.

Lawmakers said they wanted more guidance on Mr. Trump's plans for Venezuela, after he told presspersons he would put the country under U.S. control, for now.

"No serious plan has been presented for how such an extraordinary undertaking would work or what it will cost the American people. History offers no shortage of warnings about the costs - human, strategic, and moral - of assuming we can govern another nation by force," said Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The Senate is due to vote next week on whether to block further military action against Venezuela without congressional approval.

At a news conference on Saturday, Mr. Trump said Congress had not been kept fully informed because of concerns that word about his plans would get out.

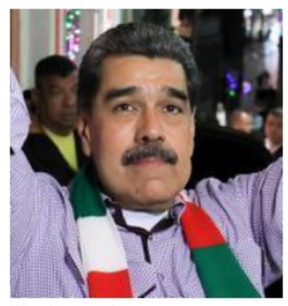
China asks U.S. to release Maduro, his wife 'at once'

Press Trust of India
BEIJING

China on Sunday called upon the United States to release Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife "at once" and "resolve issues through dialogue and negotiation". "China expresses grave concern over the U.S. forcibly seizing President Nicolas Maduro and his wife and taking them out of the country", a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement here said.

The move is in clear violation of international law, basic norms in international relations, and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, it said.

"China calls on the U.S. to ensure the personal safety of President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, release them at once, stop



Nicolas Maduro

toppling the government of Venezuela, and resolve issues through dialogue and negotiation," it added.

The Ministry earlier on Saturday had condemned the U.S. air strikes, describing it as a hegemonic act.

Countries such as Russia and Iran, which have long-standing ties with Mr. Maduro's government, were quick to condemn the operation but their alarm was also shared by Washington's allies including France and the EU.

Russia demanded the U.S. leadership "reconsider its position and release the legally elected President of the sovereign country and his wife".

The EU more generally expressed concern at the developments and urged respect for international law, even as it noted that Mr. Maduro "lacks legitimacy". U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the nation will discuss the "evolving situation" in Venezuela with U.S. counterparts while noting Britain will "shed no tears" about the demise of Mr. Maduro's "regime".

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said the intervention "violates international law and pushes the region toward a horizon of uncertainty".

(With AFP inputs)

At least 80 Yemeni separatists killed in fighting, says official

Agence France-Presse
ADEN

At least 80 troops from Yemen's secessionist Southern Transitional Council (STC) have been killed in fighting with Saudi-backed forces and strikes since Friday, a military official from the group said on Sunday.

At least 152 members of the UAE-backed STC forces were wounded and 130 were taken captive, the official said, giving a toll of casualties since the start of the operation.

Saudi-backed forces began on Friday operations to retake swathes of territory seized by the UAE-backed STC, as a struggle for dominance between forces backed by Riyadh and Abu Dhabi deepened a rift between the two Gulf allies.

Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates said in a statement that Yemenis should exercise restraint and prioritise dialogue to safeguard security and stability.

(With Reuters inputs)

Myanmar's junta releases over 6,100 prisoners on independence anniversary

Associated Press
BANGKOK

Myanmar's junta granted amnesty to more than 6,100 prisoners and reduced other inmates' sentences on Sunday to mark the 78th anniversary of the country's independence from Britain.

It was not immediately clear whether those released include the thousands of political detainees imprisoned for opposing military rule.

The amnesty comes as the military government proceeds with a month-long, three-stage election process that critics say is designed to add a facade of legitimacy to the status quo.

Released prisoners, in a bus, being welcomed by family members and colleagues after they left Insein Prison on Sunday. AP

State-run *MRTV* television reported that Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the head of the military government, pardoned 6,134 prisoners. A separate statement said 52 foreigners will also be released and deported from Myanmar. No comprehensive list of those freed is available.

Other prisoners received reduced sentences, except for those convicted of serious charges such as murder and rape or those jailed on charges under various other security acts.

The release terms warn that if the freed detainees violate the law again, they will have to serve the remainder of their original sentences in addition to any new sentence.

Sri Lanka's JVP slams military aggression of U.S. in Venezuela

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the chief constituent of Sri Lanka's ruling National People's Power (NPP) coalition, on Sunday "strongly condemned" the United States's actions in Venezuela.

"We strongly condemn the United States's military aggression against the independent and sovereign State of Venezuela and the abduction of democratically elected President Nicholas Maduro and his wife," the leftist JVP said in a statement issued in Sinhala.

According to reports in local media, the statement – which party General Secretary Tilvin Silva also shared on his Facebook page – said: "As in any other free and sovereign state, the right to determine the future, and the leaders of the country, rests on the people of Venezuela. Powerful countries do not have the right to violate this principle."

Sport

Zverev excels in Germany's romp

Agence France-Presse
SYDNEY

Alexander Zverev clinched victory for Germany against the Netherlands as the World No. 3 demolished Tallon Griekspoor in the United Cup here on Sunday after Eva Lys had beaten Suzan Lamens.

Germany completed the sweep by winning the mixed doubles.

In the other tie in Sydney, Canada swept to a 3-0 win over China.

Meanwhile, in Perth, Great Britain prevailed over Japan 2-1 despite Emma Raducanu pulling out and Naomi Osaka posting a win. In the second tie, Switzerland claimed the deciding mixed doubles against Italy to win 2-1 and ensure a quarterfinal spot.

The results: At Sydney: Germany bt the Netherlands 3-0 (Eva Lys bt Suzan Lamens 6-2, 6-2; Alexander Zverev bt Tallon Griekspoor 7-5, 6-0; Laura Siegemund & Zverev bt Demi Schuurs & Griekspoor 6-3, 6-2).
Canada bt China 3-0 (Felix Auger-Aliassime bt Zhizhen Zhang 6-4, 6-4; Victoria Mboko bt Lin Zhu 2-6, 6-2, 6-0; Mboko & Auger-Aliassime bt Xiaodi You & Rigele Te 6-1, 6-3).
At Perth: Great Britain bt Japan 2-1 (Billy Harris bt Shintaro Mochizuki 7-6(4), 6-3; Katie Swan lost Naomi Osaka 6-7(4), 1-6; Olivia Nicholls & Neal Skupski bt Nao Hibino & Yasutaka Uchiyama 7-5, 4-6, [10-7].
Switzerland bt Italy 2-1 (Stan Wawrinka lost to Flavio Cobolli 4-6, 7-6(2), 6-7(4); Belinda Bencic bt Jasmine Paolini 6-4, 6-3; Bencic & Jakub Paul bt Sara Errani & Andrea Vavassori 7-5, 4-6, [10-7]).

Arjun, Sai Shiva take opening day's honours

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

Teenagers Arjun Chheda and Sai Shiva Sankaran held off their rivals to win the MRF Formula 2000 and Formula 1600 races, respectively, to kick-start their campaign in the third round of the MRF MMSC FMSCI Indian National Car Racing Championship 2025, at the Madras International Circuit, here on Sunday.

Arjun, 17, fully capitalised on a poor start by pole-sitter Ishaan Madesh and took the honours in the MRF F2000 races. Finishing third behind the pair was M.B. Tarun who briefly was in second before yielding ground to Ishaan in the first lap.

In the MRF F1600 race, Sai Shiva Sankaran, also 17, started from pole position

Taking advantage: Arjun capitalised on pole-sitter Ishaan's poor start. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and held off, Arjun S. Nair and Nigel Abraham Thomas to consolidate his position at the top of the points standings.

The day ended on a dramatic note with Vinith Kumar winning the Formula LGB 1300 race despite a semi-spin exiting the final corner in the last lap while Joel Joseph came in a close second.

Lokith Lingesh Ravin completed the podium.

The results (provisional – all 8 laps, Race-1):

MRF F2000: 1. Arjun Chheda (12mins, 46.225s); 2. Ishaan Madesh (12:46.796); 3. M.B. Tarun (13:09.429).

MRF F1600: 1. Sai Shiva Makesh Sankaran (13:52.861); 2. Arjun S. Nair (13:53.707); 3. Nigel Abraham Thomas (13:55.467).

Indian Touring Cars: 1. Biren Pithawalla (Team N1) (15:09.224); 2. Dhruv Chavan (Buzzing Hornet Motorsports) (15:21.522); 3. Perajun Krishnan (Team Performance Racing) (15:30.571).

Indian Touring Cars 1625: 1. Nikanth Rambalu (Team Performance Racing) (15:50.915); 2. Vidyaprakash Damodaran (Team Performance Racing) (15:57.182).

Indian Junior Touring Cars: 1. Rithwik Thomas (Race Concepts Motorsports) (15:47.358); 2. Viswas Vijayaraj (Team Performance Racing) (15:47.734); 3. Jarshan Anand (16:06.863).

Super Stock: 1. T.S. Diljith (DTS Racing) (16:34.355); 2. Kesara Godage (Redline Racing) (16:39.516); 3. Lal Kattikulam Bharathan (DTS Racing) (16:46.063).

Formula LGB 1300 (Open and Juniors): 1. Vinith Kumar (DTS Racing) (15;13.793); 2. Joel Joseph (DTS Racing) (15:13.853); 3. Lokithlingeash Ravi (DTS Racing) (15:14.969).

MRF Saloons (Toyota Etios): 1. Akshay Muralidharan (17:02.921); 2. Tarushi Vikram (17:12.409); 3. Siddhanth Koundinya (17:29.551).

Rupam and Syndrela... dominant display. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Syndrela and Rupam emerge champions

ANI
VADODARA

Syndrela Das and Rupam Sardar won the u-17 girls' and boys' titles in the WTT Youth Contender while Divija Paul and Dev Pranav Bhat emerged the u-13 champions. Syndrela beat M. Hansini 11-3, 9-11, 11-9, 11-8 and Rupam defeated Soham Mukherjee 11-8, 6-11, 11-5, 11-3.

Divija beat Harshitha Nurani 11-7, 7-11, 8-11, 11-7, 11-5 and Dev Pranav Bhatt scored a 11-6, 7-11, 11-7, 11-4 win over Ashvajith Muthukumaran.

OUT & IN

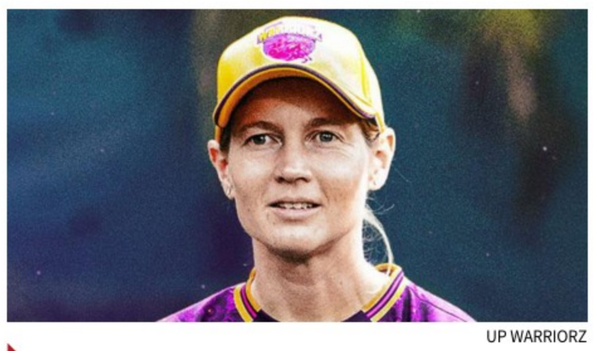
Soorma parts ways with Menezes; Rani takes charge as interim coach

FILE PHOTO: SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Soorma Hockey Club has parted ways with head coach Jude Menezes , *in pic*. Team mentor Rani Rampal has taken charge as the interim coach for the remainder of the tournament. Soorma, which finished as the runner-up in the 2024-25 HIL, has lost all four of its matches so far this season.

NEW ROLE

UP Warriorz names Lanning as the captain for WPL's fourth edition



UP WARRIORZ

UP Warriorz named Australia's Meg Lanning as captain for the fourth edition of the Women's Premier League. Signed by the UP franchise for ₹1.9 crore, Lanning had previously led Delhi Capitals to the final in all three editions. The 33-year-old Lanning also scored 952 runs in 27 matches for Capitals.

GOOD NEWS

Former Australian Test player Martyn out of coma in 'miracle'

FILE PHOTO

Former Australian Test player Damien Martyn has woken from an induced coma following meningitis. "It's been an unbelievable turn of events in the last 48 hours. He has responded extraordinarily well since coming out of the coma to the point where his family feels it's like some sort of miracle," said ex-teammate Adam Gilchrist.

X-FACTOR

Hardik will be the pivotal player for India in the T20 WC: de Villiers

FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

Hardik Pandya will be the pivotal player for India in the forthcoming T20 World Cup. He can bowl in any situation, he can bat anywhere in the line-up. There's a sense in the opposition like we need to get him out, we gonna lose the game if he bats for three or four overs — Legendary South African AB de Villiers.

Tigers post a gritty win over Soorma

Kalinga Lancers fight back to outwit Ranchi Royals in an absorbing contest, thanks to drag-flicker Hendrickx and Gursahibjit's twin goals

HIL - MEN

K. Keerthivasan
CHENNAI

Defending champion Shrachi Bengal Tigers may not have produced a performance befitting its status, but it did enough to grind out a 3-1 win over JSW Soorma HC in the Men's Hockey India League at the SDAT-Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium here on Sunday.

Lethal weapon: Abhishek doubled Tigers' lead with a thunderous strike. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Mediocre affair

What was expected to be a high-quality contest between last season's winner and third-placed team rarely rose above mediocrity.

Both sides struggled in the attacking circle, squandering possession and promising situations, as the game lacked purpose without either goalkeeper being seriously tested. The first half, in particular, witnessed poor finishing.

Tigers finally roared after the break. In the third quarter, Tom Grambusch's penalty-corner drive took a faint touch off Sukhjeet Singh's stick to break the deadlock.

Soon after, Abhishek showcased why he remains one of the most feared forwards in the league. With Jeremy Hayward closing him down, Abhishek shifted the ball wide and unleashed a thunderous backhand that flew past 'keeper Vincent Vanasch, to double the lead. Soorma briefly threatened a late comeback when Prabhjot Singh swept past Jamie Carr with six minutes remaining.

Sensing that it was racing against time, Soorma withdrew Vanasch in a last-ditch attempt to force an equaliser. However, Tigers exploited the vacant goal-mouth, with Gursevak Singh sealing the tie.

Later, in an absorbing contest, Vedanta Kalinga Lancers produced a top-class effort – it twice came back from deficit – to outwit Ranchi Royals 4-2.

A brace each by drag-flick specialist Alexander Hendrickx and Gursahibjit Singh earned Lancers full points.

The results: Shrachi Bengal Tigers 3 (Sukhjeet 33-pc, Abhishek 45, Gursevak 60) bt JSW Soorma HC 1 (Prabhjot 54).

Vedanta Kalinga Lancers 4 (Hendrickx 9-pc, 28-pc, Gursahibjit 16, 26) bt Ranchi Royals 2 (Boon 1-pc, Mandeep 9).

Onus on overseas stars to shine for Giants

WPL COUNTDOWN

Vivek Krishnan

Gujarat Giants' journey in the Women's Premier League has been riddled with disappointment since the very start.

Having finished with the wooden spoon in 2023 and 2024, the franchise fared a tad better last year by finishing third in the league stage to qualify for the Eliminator. But on the big day, the Giants were well short of the standards needed to overcome Harmanpreet Kaur's Mumbai Indians.

Horses for courses: Gardner will look to make the best use of the available resources. FILE PHOTO: EMMANUAL YOGINI

Vital cog

Ashleigh Gardner: The Gujarat Giants skipper is arguably the best all-rounder in the women's game right now. The 28-year-old Australian's destructive ball-striking ability makes her an invaluable asset in the middle-order, and she is astute enough with her off-breaks to be able to prise out breakthroughs at crucial junctures

Punch above its weight

For 2026 to bring about a change of fortune, GG's 18-member playing contingent will have to punch considerably above its weight.

The Giants management went into the mega auction last November with a purse of ₹9 crore, second only to UP Warriorz's ₹14.5 crore among the five teams, but the frailties that crippled the team in previous editions appear to remain.

Having retained Ashleigh Gardner and Beth Mooney, GG's biggest investment at the auction table was the acquisition of 36-year-old all-rounder Sophie Devine for ₹2 crore.

While the former New Zealand captain, who retired from ODIs after the World Cup in November but intends to continue playing T20Is, adds significant might and experience to the Giants set-up, the absence of pedigreed Indian batters means that Devine, Gardner and Mooney will have to do the heavy-lifting in the top six. It may take wicketkeeper-batter Yastika Bhatia, who was ruled out of the ODI World Cup due to a knee injury, some time to find her groove.

In the pace department, too, the Giants appear to be light on experienced Indian players.

Renuka Singh is the exception, and the 30-year-old from Himachal will have to lend a helping hand to youngsters Kashvee Gautam and Titas Sadhu.

In 22-year-old Kashvee's case, it remains to be seen whether she is able to live up to the expectations after a promising debut campaign (11 wickets in nine matches).

The onus of managing GG's resources rests with Gardner. The 28-year-old Australian took over the reins from Mooney last year, and led the team to a maiden playoff appearance.

The added responsibility seemed to bring the best out of the all-rounder - she scored 243 runs in nine matches, including three half-centuries, at a blistering strike rate of 164.18 and claimed eight wickets with off-spin.

If the surfaces are conducive to spin in Navi Mumbai and Vadodara, Australian leg-spinner Georgia Wareham, who has been roped in for ₹1 crore, will also have to fire on all cylinders.

Otherwise, another disappointing season could unfold for the Giants.

The squad: Ashleigh Gardner (Capt.), Beth Mooney (wk), Yastika Bhatia (wk), Bharti Fulmali, Danni Wyatt-Hodge, Kanika Ahuja, Sophie Devine, Kim Garth, Kashvee Gautam, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Tanuja Kanwar, Renuka Singh, Titas Sadhu, Georgia Wareham, Happy Kumari, Anushka Sharma, Ayushi Soni, and Shivani Singh.

Giants' fixtures:
At Navi Mumbai:
Jan. 10: vs UP Warriorz*; **Jan. 11:** Delhi Capitals; **Jan. 13:** Mumbai Indians; **Jan. 16:** Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

At Vadodara:
Jan. 19: RCB; **Jan. 22:** UPW; **Jan. 27:** DC; **Jan. 30:** MI.

**3 p.m. start, rest of the matches commence at 7.30 p.m.*

Gorzelany makes the difference for Tigers

HIL - WOMEN

Santadeep Dey
RANCHI

After a 5-0 shellacking in the reverse leg, Shrachi Bengal Tigers would have been waiting for the opportunity to exact revenge on Ranchi Royals.

And on Sunday, the occasion presented itself as the Tigers managed to eke out a 1-0 win in the eighth Women's Hockey India League fixture of the 2025-26 season at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Stadium here.

Perhaps the strategy of a fourth new captain in as many matches worked. Sushila Chanu wore the captain's hat in the first 3 p.m. fixture of the league; she is the latest addition to the list after Vandana Katariya, Agustina Gorzelany, and Valentina Raposo.

Or it had to be the sheer brilliance of Gorzelany, the tournament's highest goalscorer, with four against her name after this fixture.

The video umpire was made to work hard as four referrals came inside the first quarter. Although each of those decisions went in favour of the home side and the Royals ended up winning five penalty corners in the stop-start first quarter, the Tigers' resolute defence ensured the deadlock wasn't broken.

Ecstatic: Gorzelany is mobbed by teammates after scoring the winner. R.V. MOORTHY

Meanwhile, a controversial call saw Nikki Pradhan and Co. being denied a penalty stroke despite an on-target shot catching Valentina Raposo's toe behind Tigers' goalkeeper Jennifer Rizzo.

From the second quarter, the Tigers had a sudden glow-up. Lalremsiami almost got on the board, slipping away from her marker with under a minute remaining in the first half. But the Royals' second 'keeper, Madhuri Kindo, forced the sprightly Indian forward wide in a one-on-one situation.

Justifying her price tag

It was eventually left to Gorzelany to deliver again. The Argentine dragflick specialist justified her price tag – she is the most expensive signing at ₹42 lakh – getting the Tigers the much-needed breakthrough from a run-of-the-mill penalty corner in the third quarter.

The result:

Shrachi Bengal Tigers 1 (Gorzelany 37) bt Ranchi Royals 0.

Arsenal stretches its lead; Barca leaves it late against Espanyol

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Arsenal fought back from a goal down – with strikes from Gabriel Magalhaes and two from the returning Declan Rice – to beat Bournemouth 3-2 on Saturday and stretch its lead at the top of the Premier League on Saturday.

Liverpool was held to a dramatic 2-2 draw by Fulham on Sunday as Harrison Reed scored a stunning stoppage-time equaliser.

Dani Olmo and Robert Lewandowski's late strikes helped Barcelona snatch a 2-0 win at Espanyol on Saturday to remain four points clear at the top of LaLiga after Gonzalo Garcia bagged a hat-trick for Real Madrid as it beat Real Betis 5-1 on Sunday.

The results:

Premier League: Leeds 1 (Aaronson 62) drew with Manchester United 1 (Cunha 65); Everton 2 (Beto 66, Barry 90+1) lost to Brentford 4 (Igor Thiago 11, 51, 88, Collins 50); Fulham 2 (Wilson 17, Reed 90+7) drew with Liverpool 2 (Wirtz 57, Gakpo 90+4); Newcastle 2 (Guimaraes 71, Thiaw 78) bt Crystal Palace 0; Tottenham 1 (Davies 30) drew with Sunderland 1 (Brobbey 80).

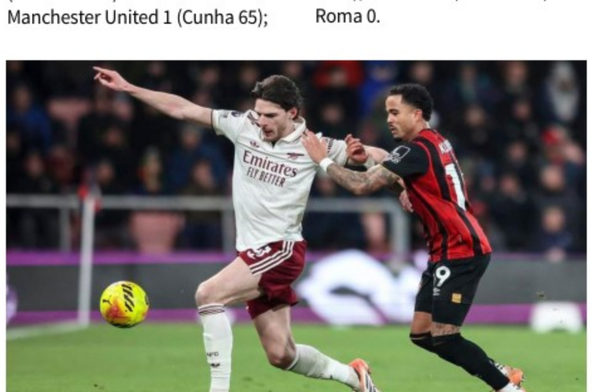
LaLiga: Sevilla 0 lost to Levante 3 (Losada 45+2, Espi 77, Alvarez 90+4); Real Madrid 5 (Gonzalo Garcia 20, 50, 82, Asencio 56, Fran Garcia 90+3) bt Real Betis 1 (Hernandez 60).

Serie A: Lazio 0 lost to Napoli 2 (Spinazzola 13, Rrahmani 32).

On Saturday: Premier League: Brighton 2 (Rutter 29, Ayari 47) bt Burnley 0; Wolves 3 (Arias 4, Hwang 31-pen, Mane 41) bt West Ham 0; Bournemouth 2 (Evanilson 10, Kroupi 76) lost to Arsenal 3 (Gabriel 16, Rice 54, 71).

LaLiga: Celta Vigo 4 (Iglesias 33-pen, 59, El-Abdellaoui 83, Alvarez 90+4) bt Valencia 1 (Pepelu 70); Osasuna 1 (Garcia 34) drew with Athletic Bilbao 1 (Guruzeta 71); Elche 1 (Neto 30) lost to Villarreal 3 (Moleiro 7, Mikautadze 13, Pedraza 83); Espanyol 0 lost to Barcelona 2 (Olmo 86, Lewandowski 90).

Serie A: Juventus 1 (McKennie 49) drew with Lecce 1 (Banda 45+1); Atalanta 1 (Scalvini 12) bt Roma 0.



Two-goal hero: Rice, who missed the last game due to injury, made his comeback count. GETTY IMAGES

Perfect stage for Indians to alter dismal record

Local challenge: The host's hopes rest on Saketh, Dhamne, Nagal, Prajwal, Aryan and Dhakshineshwar.

BENGALURU OPEN

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Starting 2019, in the 16 ATP Challenger tournaments that have been held in India, there has just been one home winner – Sumit Nagal in 2024 in Chennai.

On Monday, when the Dafa News Bengaluru Open Challenger 125 gets underway at the S.M. Krishna Stadium inside Cubbon Park, Nagal and a bunch of Indians will be hoping to slightly alter this miserable record.

It will help that this year's competition, despite being in the second-highest tier of the Challenger Tour, has a low cut-off. The last direct acceptance into the singles main draw is Eric Vanshelboim at No. 472.

Weaker field

The Canberra International Challenger, being played concurrently, has former World No. 4 and 2014 US Open finalist Kei Nishikori as the last man in at No. 158. The geographical proximity of Canberra to the season's first Major Australian Open perhaps explains this gulf with Bengaluru, but the overall field in the Garden City is weaker compared to the previous two editions as well.

In 2025, Blake Ellis at No. 300 was the final direct entry while in 2024 it was Giovanni Fonio at 279.

But this shouldn't be held against the event. Home Challengers are hosted to help local players, and shifting the competition to an early January slot from its traditional post-Australian Open window has seemingly resulted in more Indians getting into the main draw.

When last year's four-Challenger swing began in February in Chennai, no Indian, barring Nagal at No. 105, was eligible without a wild card. This time in Bengaluru, apart from Nagal, Aryan Shah and Karan Singh -- both ranked in the 400s – are in the final 32 on merit.

Dhakshineswar Suresh, Manas Dhamne and local lad S.D. Prajwal Dev are the three wildcards, and on Monday, Sidharth Rawat can potentially join his countrymen as a qualifier.

However, before they try and reach for the title, there is a dismal number from the previous season that requires rewriting – Indians finished with a 1-13 win-loss record across the four Challengers.

There is thus a high bar and a low bar to clear. It will be in Indian tennis' best interests if both can be managed.

Qualifying first round (select results): Sidharth Rawat bt Nitinkumar Sinha 6-3, 7-5; Aziz Ouakaa (Tun) bt A. Vishal Balsekar 6-4, 7-6(3); Eero Vasa (Fin) bt Adil Kalyanpur 3-6, 6-3, 6-0; Arthur Reymond (Fra) bt Ramkumar Ramanathan 7-5, 7-6(3); Dominik Palan (Cze) bt Dev Javia 3-6, 7-5, 7-6(5); Niels Visker (Ned) bt Manish Sureshkumar 6-3, 6-3.

INBRIEF

Venus still 'feeling the fire' ahead of Australian Open

Seven-time Major singles champion Venus Williams said on Sunday she's still driven to play good tennis – and "it gives you great legs" – as she prepares for an Australian Open tilt at age 45. Venus will become the oldest woman to play in the main draw at the season-opening Grand Slam after accepting a wildcard, five years after she last competed in Melbourne. "I definitely don't wake up and come halfway across the world – or more than halfway – to not be feeling the fire," she said. Venus will play warm-up events in Auckland next week and Hobart ahead of the January 18-February 1 Australian Open.

63 wrestlers snapped up in the PWL auction

A total of 63 wrestlers were snapped up as the six franchises spent in excess of ₹11 crore at the auction for the fifth season of the Pro Wrestling League, which concluded on Saturday. The tournament, resuming after a gap of six years, will be held from January 15 to February 1 at the Noida Indoor Stadium. Teams will compete across nine weight categories – five in the men's section and four in the women's section.

Root-Brook stand rescues England on a rain-affected opening day

The two top-ranked batters in the world steer the tourist to 211 for three from a precarious 57 for three before bad light stops play at the SCG

THE ASHES

Agence France-Presse
SYDNEY

Joe Root and Harry Brook tamed Australia's all-pace attack with an unbroken 154-run stand on Sunday to rescue England and give it the upper hand after a rain-hit day one of the fifth and final Ashes Test.

Batting after skipper Ben Stokes won the toss at a sold-out Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG), they steered the tourist to 211 for three when bad light forced stopped play just before tea.

Subsequent rain and the risk of lightning made no further play possible.

Root was unbeaten on 72 and Brook batting on 78, came together with England tottering at 57 for three after losing Ben Duckett (27), Zak Crawley (16) and Jacob Bethell (10) before lunch.

The two top-ranked batters in the world set about counter-attacking on a decent batting pitch providing little movement for the bowlers, who toiled in the second session without joy.

Both brought up hard-fought half-centuries and, with dark storm clouds looming, kept the scoreboard ticking over at a fast clip.

England came into the game buoyed by a four-wicket win inside two days in the previous Test in Melbourne, desperate to keep the momentum going.

That victory snapped a nearly 15-year winless streak in Australia, but came too late to save the series, with the host retaining the urn by winning in Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide.

Australia sprang a surprise by including all-rounder Beau Webster in place of quick Jhye Richardson, with off-spinner Todd Murphy overlooked.

England brought in seamer Matthew Potts for the injured Gus Atkinson in its only change, with its frontline slow bowler Shoaib Bashir missing out for a fifth straight Test.

Duckett was lively when play started, crunching five boundaries from Mitchell Starc in a quick-fire 27 off 24 balls.

But England's tormentor Mitchell Starc had the last laugh, enticing an outside edge from an angled ball to wicketkeeper Alex Carey at full stretch.

It was the fifth time Starc dismissed Duckett this series.

Crawley was next to go, trapped leg-before by Michael Neser.

A cautious Bethell took 15 balls to get off the mark and never looked confident.

He departed after prodding at a moving delivery from Scott Boland that took a faint edge and was collected easily by Carey as England fell to 57 for three.

Root joined Brook at the crease and they rebuilt the innings.

Prolific: Root brought up his 67th half-century in the longest format. GETTY IMAGES

SCOREBOARD

England — 1st Innings: Zak Crawley lbw b Neser 16, Ben Duckett c Carey b Starc 27, Jacob Bethell c Carey b Boland 10, Joe Root (batting) 72, Harry Brook (batting) 78; Extras (b-1, lb-5, nb-1, w-1): 8; Total (for three wkts. in 45 overs): 211.
Fall of wickets: 1-35, 2-51, 3-57.
Australia bowling: Starc 12-1-53-1, Neser 10-0-36-1, Boland 13-0-48-1, Green 8-0-57-0, Webster 2-0-11-0.
Toss: England.

Tamil Nadu men begin title defence in style

BASKETBALL

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu men kick-started their title defence on a strong note, breezing past Rajasthan 101-68 on the opening day of the 75th Senior National basketball championships at the Nehru Indoor Stadium here on Sunday.

The home team bolted out of the gate early in the first quarter, with Baladhaneshwar Poiyamozhi opening the account with two free throws followed by a jump-shot three-pointer.

Pranav Prince then consolidated the early lead with a dunk and a three-pointer as the host closed out the first quarter 27-7.

In the opening phase of the game, the TN defenders were on the money with rebounds while Rajasthan's shooting was off target. From there, it was about just protecting the lead as TN kept the pace and was 51-26 ahead at half-time.

In the third quarter, TN kept the foot on the pedal and raced to a 66-36 lead with Muin Bek Hafeez drilling in back-to-back three-pointers in the space of a minute. For the winner, Aravind Kumar was the top-scorer with 16 points, followed by R. Hariram with 13.

Catch me if you can: Tamil Nadu's Anantharaj in action against Rajasthan. R. RAGU

Important results: Women: Group A: Indian Railways 101 (Pushpa Senthil Kumar 19, Manmeet Kaur 18, Sathya 17, Dharshini 14, Harshita 10) bt Delhi 51 (D. Kritika 11, Garima Gosain 11).
Karnataka 91 (Sruti Aravind 24, Mahek Sharma 21, S. Sobana 16, M. Bhandhavya 14) bt Maharashtra 71 (Siya Deodhar 21).
Group B: Kerala 91 (V.J. Jayalakshmi 15, Susan Florentina 14, Akshya Philip14) bt Gujarat 22.
Tamil Nadu 72 (R. Sruthy 21, Asmitha 14, Antheya Daisy 11, Kogilavani 11) bt Madhya Pradesh 65 (Khushi Pal Singh 23, Manvi Srivasthava 12, Gunvi Agarwal 11, Priya Goswami 11).
Men: Group A: Karnataka 104 (B.K. Anil Kumar 22, Aravind Arumugham 15, Aaron Montero 14, Abhishek Gowda 11, Pratyanshu Tomar 10) bt Gujarat 69 (Mirant Italia 17, Jigrajsinh Gohil 17, Vinay Kaushil 13, Sahaj Kumar Kaushik 10).
Tamil Nadu 101 (Aravind Kumar 16, R. Hariram 13, P. Jeevanatham 12, Pranav Prince 10) bt Rajasthan 68 (Mohammed Idwan 18, Lokendra Singh 15, Akshit Hooda 15, Piyush Meena 13).
Group B: Uttar Pradesh 112 (Harsh Dagar 38, Kushal Singh Digvijay Singh 18, Satayjeet Chaprana 17) bt Punjab 100 (Tejinderbir Singh 23, Gurwinder Singh 20, Shabibjit Singh 20, Swapnil Singh 10).

National boxing championship starts four hours late

Sports Bureau
GREATER NOIDA

The National boxing championship beginning here on Sunday did not get off to the start the federation would have expected, delayed by more than four hours and half of the bouts forced to be postponed due to lack of facilities.

Already delayed by four days due to pollution, the Elite men's and women's championships, being held simultaneously for the first time at the same venue, were expected to kick off at 2 pm at the Gautam Buddha University here with a formal inauguration by Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya. But with the three boxing rings not set up till late evening, the competition could begin only after 6 pm, even as the boxers sat around the massive hall, frustrated, among them Assam's Olympic bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain.

Lovlina's was one of only three women's bouts to be played on the opening day of the competition, with the remaining bouts pushed to Monday, while all the scheduled opening round bouts in the men's section were decided to be held, the competition continuing late into the night.

Among the main contenders, former World Championships silver medallist and Olympian Amit Panghal beat Usman Mohd. Sultan of Bihar 5-0 in the 55kg.

"Some of the stuff needed to set up the rings was supposed to arrive last night but the university gates were closed and the trucks were not allowed in. By the time we cleared all permissions and got down to getting the playing arena ready, there was delay," the organisers admitted but could not explain the inordinate delay.

"The Boxing Federation of India acknowledges that the commencement of day one of the senior boxing National championships was delayed due to unforeseen circumstances. All operational matters were promptly addressed and the championships are progressing as per the revised schedule," the BFI said in an official statement.

LIVE TELECAST

HIL: Women: Sony Sports Ten 1 & LIV, 5 p.m. Men: Sony Sports Ten 1 & LIV, 7.30 p.m.
The Ashes: 5th Test, day 3, Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 4.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

Can Alonso & Co. pose a Real challenge to Barcelona?

LALIGA

Surya SS
CHENNAI

The floodlights of LaLiga are blazing again, and football's greatest rivalry is setting the league on fire.

Barcelona and Real Madrid are locked in a tense title clash, with the latter trailing the defending champion.

Madrid's horror run last season (trophyless and losing all four El Clasicos) sparked a dramatic response.

The side made big signings, brought in Leverkusen's 'Invincibles' season manager Xabi Alonso and considered this squad as the Galacticos 3.0.

On paper, it looked like the perfect reset. However, reality has been far messier.

Alonso's constant tactical experiments have produced inconsistent results and conflicts between him and his players. The core issue lies in the lack of a clear on-field identity, caused by the abundance of talent.

Barcelona's approach has been silent but deadly. The signing of Roony Bardghji and the loan arrival of Marcus Rashford have brought attacking depth to Hansi Flick's side.

Lynchpin: Raphinha's return to fitness has revived Barcelona's title charge. AP

The defence, on the contrary, has lost its soul. The decision to let go of Inigo Martinez has put pressure on the Barcelona back line. The high-line tactic has forced Gerard Martin into a demanding role, with Pau Cubarsi's inconsistency further highlighting the need for reinforcement.

The title-holder's spectacular start briefly derailed when captain Raphinha suffered a thigh injury. The leader's absence drained the team's fighting spirit and pressing intensity, contributing to defeats against Paris Saint-Germain and Real.

Barca, however, has regained its mojo after Raphinha's return.

Last season's Ballon d'Or poster-boy, Raphinha's fifth-place finish is still viewed by many as unfair. In the 24/25 season, he won the domestic treble, matched Cristiano Ronaldo's UCL record G/A.

The Champions League semifinal loss to Inter Milan ended his Ballon d'Or hopes, but that fuelled his hunger for this season.

With Pedri dominating the midfield, both Joan Garcia and Eric Garcia in top form, Barcelona looks increasingly comfortable.

Real was in rollicking form and on top of the table this season, but it all came crumbling down since its Clasico win.

Who'll gain momentum in the new year?

Making strong efforts to host 2036 Olympics: Prime Minister Modi

Press Trust of India
VARANASI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asserted that India is preparing with full strength to host the 2036 Olympic Games, and declared his government was committed to providing "more and more players greater opportunities to compete" by hosting mega sporting events in the country.

Addressing the inaugural function of the 72nd senior National volleyball Championship, being held here, via video conference, Modi said the government was making every possible effort to provide exposure to budding athletes to take up Olympic sports, and schemes like Khelo India were proving a game-changer in harnessing talent.

"The 2030 Commonwealth Games will be held in India, and the country is making strong efforts to host the 2036 Olympics, with the aim of giving more and more players greater opportunities to compete," said Modi.

Litton to lead Bangladesh at T20 World Cup

Agence France-Presse
DHAKA

Bangladesh on Sunday named its squad for the T20 World Cup beginning in February. Wicketkeeper-batter Litton Das will lead Bangladesh in the tournament.

The squad: Litton Das (Capt.), Mohammad Saif Hasan, Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Parvez Hossain Emon, Towhid Hridoy, Shamim Hossain, Nurul Hasan Sohan, Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain, Nasum Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Taskin Ahmed, Mohammad Shaifuddin and Shoriful Islam.

Harnoor feels pressure is a privilege

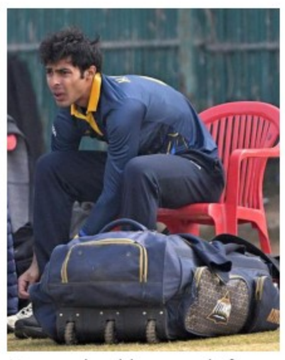
HAZARE TROPHY

Shayan Acharya
JAIPUR

Four seasons ago, when India's U-19 team won the World Cup, Harnoor Singh Pannu was one of the key members of the side.

Like most of his teammates, the swashbuckling opening batter, too, dreamed of graduating to the senior team. But coming from a cricketing family, Harnoor knew that he would have to wait for his turn. The journey has been far from easy.

Having moved to Chandigarh, when it got the BCCI affiliation in 2018, Harnoor failed to cement his place in the side, despite making his Ranji Trophy debut in 2022.



Harnoor has blossomed after moving to Punjab. EMMANUAL YOGINI

So, a couple of years ago, when an opportunity came his way to shift back to Punjab Cricket Association, where he played U-14 and U-16 cricket, Harnoor did not think twice.

The move proved right as consistent performances earned him a contract with Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League.

And, high on confidence, Harnoor amassed 338 runs in the first phase of the Ranji Trophy, and has scored 137 runs in three innings of the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

"The journey has been more of a roller-coaster, but now I feel that I belong here," Harnoor told *The Hindu*.

Playing for a team like Punjab, there's always a cut-throat competition, but he does not think too much about it.

"I have always believed that pressure is a privilege. So, every time I play a game, the only motivation is to give my best and let the selectors do their thing," he said.

Biggest strength

His coach Harminder Pannu, who is also his uncle, has been his biggest strength, along with his father and grandfather Rajinder Singh, a former Punjab cricketer.

"They have never judged me, even if I scored a zero or a hundred. I can talk to them about anything, and their support keeps me going..."

Gujarat makes the last four

Sports Bureau

Gujarat entered the semifinals of the BCCI Cooch Behar (under-19) Trophy after overcoming Karnataka by virtue of having secured the first-innings lead.

On the final day of their quarterfinal at Valsad on Sunday, Gujarat, having already earned the first-essay honours, batted for 50-odd overs, reaching 432 for seven from its overnight 178 for two, before declaring and bringing the match to a close.

The scores: Gujarat 451 and 432/7 decl. in 95.4 overs (Malay Shah 108, Purav Pujara 60, Manas M. Dave 78, Patel Kush 68, Rudra N. Patel 70) drew with Karnataka 280 in 106.2 overs.